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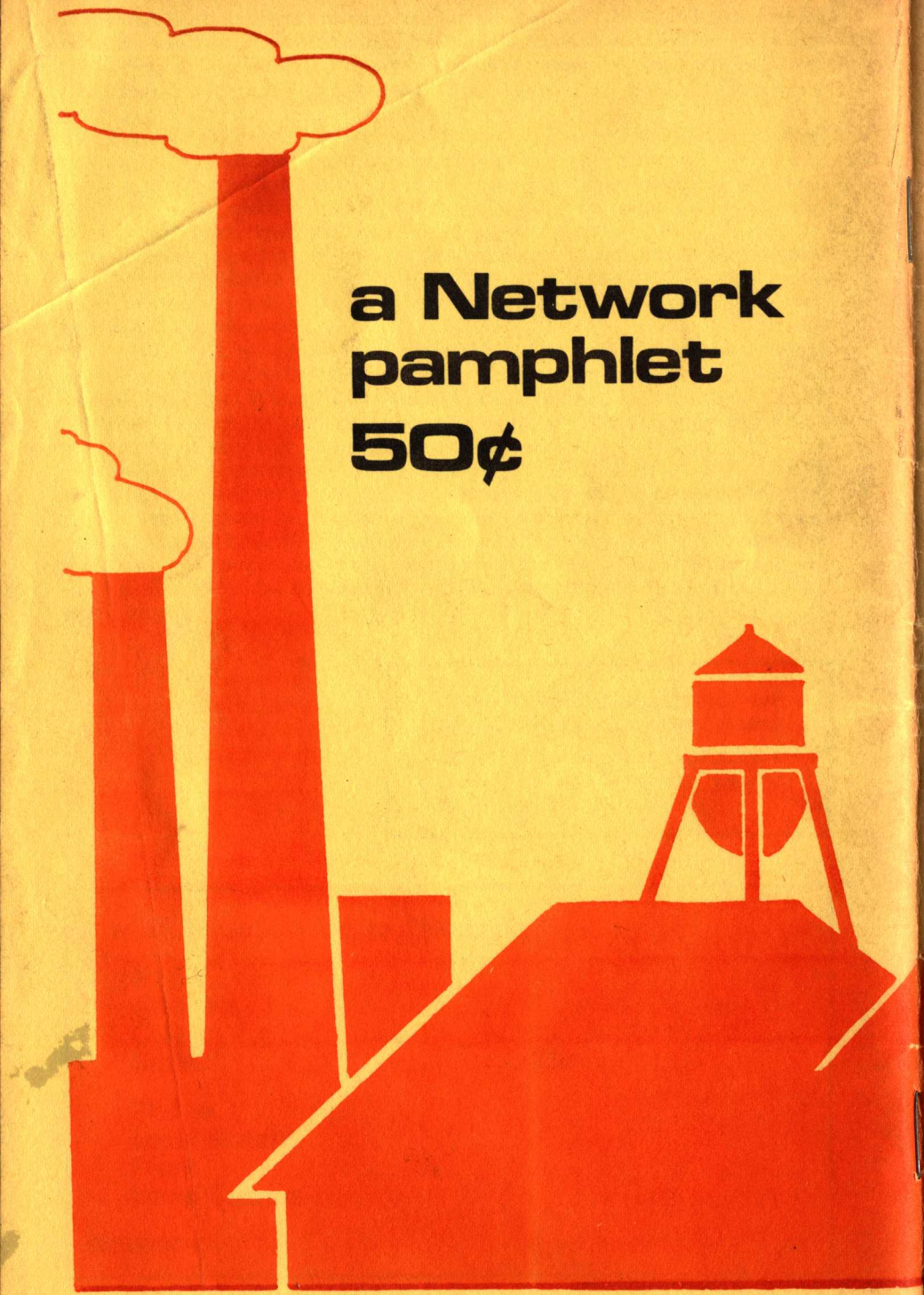

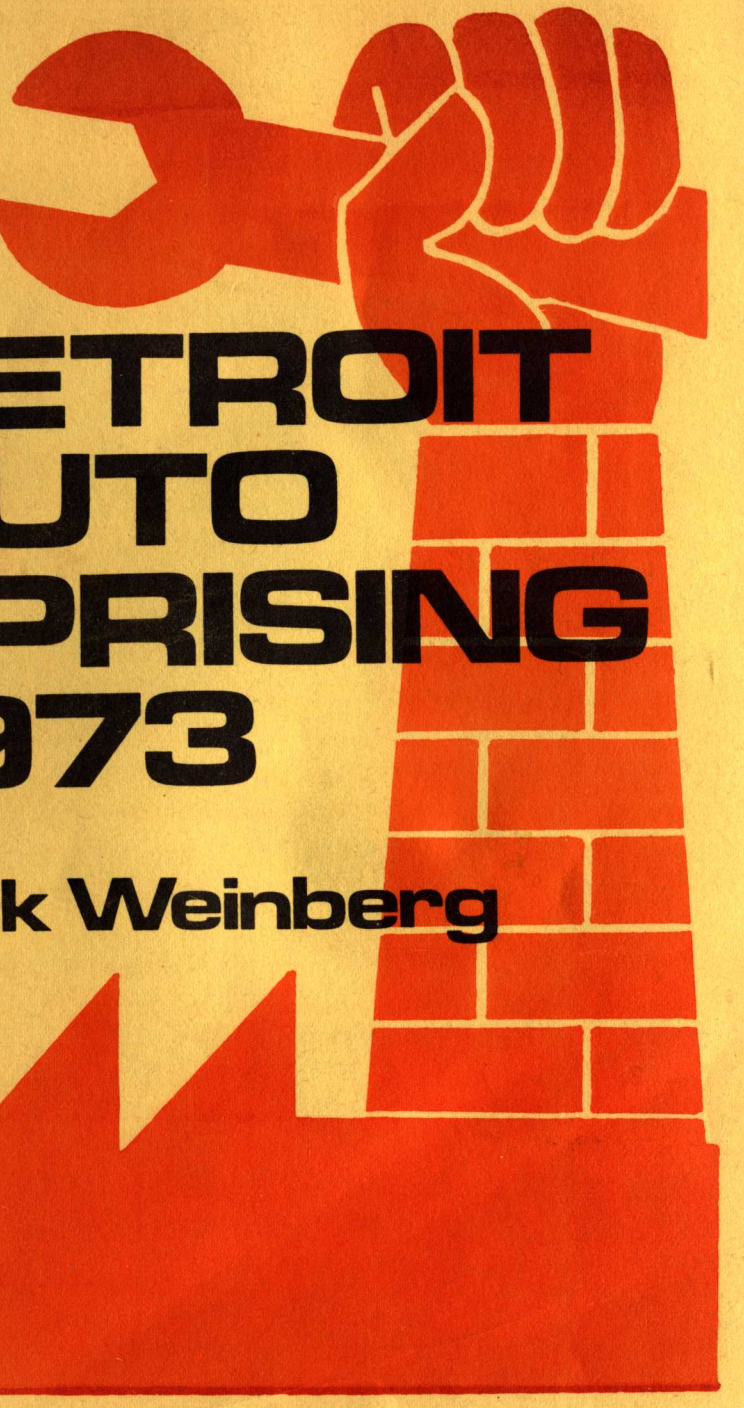

DETROIT AUTO UPRISING 1973

Jack Weinberg

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Introduction

This pamphlet is the story of events that happened in Detroit's Chrysler auto plants during the summer of 1973. The situation in auto is changing so rapidly that already this pamphlet almost seems more like a study in labor history than like a narration of recent events.

In 1973, the auto plants were experiencing boom conditions. The entire industry was undergoing an insane drive to press for auto production up to and even beyond the capacities of their industrial plant and industrial organization. Under strong competitive pressure to grind out maximum production, the auto companies adopted an attitude of total disregard for the human needs and human limitations of their workers. Pushed up to and beyond their breaking point, Chrysler's Detroit autoworkers rebelled. This pamphlet is the story of the most explosive parts of that rebellion.

As we go to press, the events of this pamphlet appear to be the products of a dim and distant past. Replacing the record-setting dizzy boom conditions of 1973, autoworkers are now in the midst of depression conditions that promise to be worse than anything that has been seen in the past 35 years. One contributing cause of the auto crisis in 1973 was nervous and physical exhaustion caused by months and months of excessive, forced overtime. But the autoworker today looks back with envy at last year's overtime.

A month ago, under the impact of inflation, it was hard to get by on a 40 hour paycheck. Already today, massive lay-offs make the 40 hour paycheck look real sweet. By early 1975, unless something is done, the whole SUB (Supplemental Unemployment Benefits) Program will be falling short and the autoworker will be at the mercy of state unemployment compensation.

To the worker on the streets, any job looks attractive—especially when the SUB runs out. On lay-off, it becomes a struggle to keep bread on the table, to hold the family together, to keep the creditor away from the door.

And everyone still in the plants has a brother, a cousin, a neice, a son or daughter that's out of work. With survival on the mind, it's sometimes hard to respond to questions of speed-up, health and safety, working conditions.

But this pamphlet coming out now still has a value. All of us have a tendency to relate to the conditions around us and to the way people react to them as a permanent state of affairs. When a struggle occurs and when the workers around us start fighting back, that struggle appears as the most natural thing imaginable. When everyone around us reacts with fear—fear appears to us as a normal and permanent human quality. When people around us are confused and disorganized, well, "That's just human nature." And when people organize themselves and show strength in unity, it's hard to understand why things haven't always been that way.

Today, November 1974, we can say one thing with certainty: US economic stability is a thing of the past. We are now in a depression. A year or two from now we'll have another boom—and then another depression. Events around us, and the way our fellow workers react to them will be changing constantly. The only thing that seems to be constant is the traitorous role played by the present top leadership of our union, the UAW. And even the role of the Woodcocks, the Frazers, the Greathouses, the Bluestones, the Bannons will be influenced by events.

It should be clear: to the auto corporation executives, autoworkers are just a commodity. When they want our labor, they have only one concern—how hard they can drive us, how much money they can make off us. They drive us as hard as they feel they can get away with. When they don't need our labor, they throw us on the streets like so much excess baggage. The SUB program was designed to lull us into a feeling of security during good times. During bad times, they take no responsiblility for keeping the program from busting out.

Working people get no more from the corporations than we are strong enough to fight for and hold on to. That is what a union is for. What little we still have, we get from the protection provided by our union. But as things get worse, it becomes clear that the people who now lead the UAW are unwilling to fight, but instead, play right into the hands of the companies. Unless something is done, sooner or later, everything positive about the union will be destroyed.

It will take an organized fight to defend auto workers from growing corporate abuse. It will take a fight to save the union and to make it once more into a fighting organization. This job will require a group of autoworkers throughout the UAW who have a vision that goes beyond the immediate situation, the immediate events. It will require a group of autoworkers who understand not just what is happening today, but also what happened yesterday, and what is likely to happen tomorrow. It will take autoworkers who understand not just their own local union, their own Region, but who understand what's going on throughout the UAW and throughout all of society. Finally, it will take a group of autoworkers who understand the role of the leaders who now run our union, autoworkers who have a program around which a new leadership can be built to save our union and move it forward during these trying times.

A magazine called **Network** has been started by rank and file autoworkers to contribute to helping develop this understanding. This pamphlet is being published by Network. More about Network can be found at the end of this pamphlet.

The author of **Detroit Auto Uprising: 1973** was working at the time at

Chrysler's Mack Ave. Stamping Plant and is a member of Local 212. He was a participant in the events described, and was fired as a result. The author also had close friends working at Jefferson Assembly, while he received information about events at the Detroit Forge Plant only through the grapevine and the newspapers. This helps explain the overemphasis on the Mack events and an under-emphasis on the Forge events.

Most of this pamphlet was written immediately following the period described. Its publication has been delayed a year primarily as a courtesy to several of the workers who had been fired. Soon after the summer's events, organized struggle to win back the jobs of fired workers disintegrated. Some were brought back by the company with long penalties on their records. Other cases were sent by the union and the company to arbitration.

There was little hope that the umpire would rule in favor of fired workers. Still, it was feared that publication of this pamphlet while the arbitration was still proceeding could provide evidence that would have been used against workers. Whether or not such evidence would effect the outcome of arbitration, its availability would have been used in the Local Union to discredit the author of this pamphlet and those associated with him. All arbitration cases have now been settled. At least 30 workers stand permanently fired. The full story can now see the light of day and must.

The dramatic events of the summer began with the spectacular shut down of the Jefferson Assembly Plant, July 24th. Two weeks later, on August 7, the Detroit Forge shut down. On August 14, the Mack sit-down began. Two days later, UAW officials mobilized a force of 1,000 union officials to physically crush the Mack strike and serve warning to autoworkers throughout Detroit. Workers were unprepared to respond effectively to this stunning blow, executed by their own union leadership. The uprising had been effectively put down.

Network Editorial Board
November 29, 1974

UAW goons head to Local 212 headquarters after breaking Mack wildcat.

Sit-down leaders Shorter, Carter are carried from the Jefferson plant.

Prolog: The Goons Of August

It was six in the morning on August 16, 1973, and still dark. A young worker ran into the union hall of the United Auto Workers, Local 212, right next to Chrysler's Detroit Mack Ave. Stamping Plant. Inside the union hall were a number of men, some carrying billy clubs and baseball bats.

"I want to speak to one of the local union officers," the worker shouted. Then, recognizing a local official, he continued: "Are you authorizing those men around the plant to attack and beat our local union members?" "You're god damn right," was the reply, "and if you don't get the hell out of here before I get my ass off this chair, we're going to whip you too."

One thousand UAW office holders were milling around the four entrances to the Mack plant. Before the day was over, this group earned a name for itself: "the goon squad." Before the goon squad appeared, picketing Mack workers were peacefully patrolling the plant entrances. Although their strike was unofficial and unauthorized by the UAW, it had won the respect of the Mack workers. But now picketing workers were being jumped, beaten, threatened by clubs and guns, their signs torn to little pieces. Detroit police looked on smiling.

At the Warren Ave. main parking lot entrance to the plant, workers were driving past to see if the strike was still on. Two dozen goon squad members stood in the middle of the street waving cars into the parking lot. These traffic directors were so insistent, that more than one driver on the way to work elsewhere, ended up in the Mack plant parking lot.

A Mack Press operator tells how he and a friend came by the Canfield Ave. walk-in gate early in the morning to find out what was going on. Seeing the assembled goons, they turned to leave. "Hey, do you guys work here?" they were asked. Nodding "yes," they tried to leave the area, but thought better when ordered: "You better get right in there if you know what's good for you."

The **Detroit Free Press** of August 17 described the scene: "The UAW muscled up a small army, reminiscent of the flying squadrons of earlier organizing days, Thursday to make sure that workers could return to their jobs unmolested by radicals at Chrysler Corp.'s reopened Mack Ave. stamping plant....UAW Vice-President Douglas Fraser, head of the union's Chrysler Department estimated that almost 1,000 loyal union men wearing 'sergeant-at-arms' armbands were massed around the plant at Mack and Lycaste on Detroit's east side when first-shift employees began arriving at about 5:30 a.m."

Included in the goon squad with Frazer were: UAW secretary-treasurer Emil Mazey, union vice-presidents Ken Bannon, Irving Bluestone, (heads of the Ford and GM Departments), and Olga Madar. The rest of the crowd was made up of UAW paid staff members, officers, committeemen, and stewards from UAW locals as far away as Ohio and Indiana.

Ken Morris, director of UAW Region 1B, where the Mack plant is located, pleased by the turnout gave a nostalgic description of what was going on to the press: "We have not used these kinds of tactics in a very, very long time. This is reminiscent of what happened in the 1930's during our organizational period."

Police Commander of the Jefferson precinct, Joseph Areeda, seeing the turnout, was quoted as saying to UAW officials: "I'm glad we're on the same side." Areeda, when he said this, showed that he remembered something Morris had conveniently forgotten. In the distant past Morris so fondly remembers, when the UAW used to mobilize hundreds or thousands of its members, it was to support striking workers even when it was necessary to fight both the company and the police. Seeing the massive UAW turnout, you can bet officer Areeda felt relieved that the UAW leadership now lines itself up with the police and company, against the workers.

For many years now, more and more workers have realized that everything good about the UAW has been rotting away. But even for the disenchanted, it was a sickening experience to see just how far our union had come.

That day we saw the UAW's biggest show of strength in the past 20 years. Many of us had come to the conclusion that one of the UAW's main problems was that it had grown soft over the years. The goon squad proved we were wrong.

And so we wouldn't miss the lesson, the **Free Press** in an editorial praising the UAW leaders, rubbed our face in it: "Some younger workers may not have realized the toughness and the leadership ability of the UAW officials;" the editorial mocked, "Some may even have been surprised that the international vice-presidents would get up early enough to be at the plant gates by 5:30 a.m."

There is a reason workers believe the UAW had grown soft. No matter how often workers ask, no matter how unbearable our problems union officials have refused to show the slightest amount of toughness of leadership ability in dealing with the company. Now the truth is out for all to see. The real strength and muscle of the UAW is reserved not for dealing with the corporations, but for dealing with the union membership. Newspapers, radio and TV had been continously announcing that starting with the first shift, August 16, the plant would be reopened and Mack employees should return to work. That morning, the UAW goon squad quickly and efficiently eliminated the picket lines. Although large numbers of workers still refused to go back to work, enough returned to start up

several of the press lines. The machinery began clanging, and the plant was declared "back in operation." The strike was over.

When the union goon squad succeeded in opening up the Mack plant, they showed the protesting workers that Chrysler is the boss. For the next week, Chrysler guards made a careful badge check of all workers entering the plant. Each guard had a copy of a list of 73 names and badge numbers. These were the people who could not return to work. The strike had been crushed.

The past day's experience seemed to teach Mack workers a single lesson: those who try to fight back are defeated and fired. A chief steward went around the plant saying: "We've been trying to tell these fools all along that it's impossible to fight Chrysler. They're too big." More common was the attitude: "How can anybody expect to win when you've got not just Chrysler, but the whole UAW against you."

Crushing the Mack strike temporarily snuffed the flame of rebellion in Detroit's Chrysler plants that had dramatically flared out into the open earlier that summer. Taking different forms and different shapes, this rebellion will continue to break out time and again throughout the auto industry and throughout the UAW so long as the conditions that generated it remain. An auto workers movement growing out of these experiences and learning from them will emerge and triumph. This pamphlet was written to let workers from different plants and locals share these experiences.

Massed Chrysler plant guards assisted the UAW goons and the Detroit police in their strike-breaking operation at the Mack Avenue Chrysler plant.

1. The Jefferson Sit-in

As summer 1973 began, Detroit's auto plants were simmering. Acts of solidarity, job actions, small walkouts and a few big ones—worker resistance to the company, all were sharply on the rise.

At first, very few workers knew anything out of the ordinary was going on. Most of the actions were so small they were rarely noticed outside of the department and shift where they happened. But on July 24, 3 weeks before the Mack strike, the brewing rebellion broke into the open.

From early morning on, throughout the city, the grapevine was buzzing about strange things happening at the Jefferson Ave. plant. That night, second shift workers on their way home picked up the morning "Free Press" carrying a front page picture of jubilant black workers, fists clenched in the air accompanied by the headline: "**2 ANGRY WORKERS SHUT CHRYSLER PLANT.**"

The lead article began: "Two Chrysler assembly line workers put a 13-hour stranglehold on the company's huge Jefferson assembly plant Tuesday, idling some 5,000 employees. They forced the immediate firing of their supervisor and got total amnesty from the automaker before ending the shutdown."

The joyous atmosphere at the plant even infected the reporters who covered the story for the "Free Press". They wrote: "At 7:11 p.m. Tuesday a cheer rang from the depths of the Chrysler assembly plant on E. Jefferson. It did not stop until long after two men were born out of the main gate on the shoulders of men who were awfully pleased and awfully proud....It was a coup widely approved, if not acclaimed by other hourly workers at the plant. They chatted amiably with bystanders outside the windows and when some of them talked about what happened, they broke into broad grins." The workers had actually won. Chrysler had been forced to meet their demands and fire the foreman.

1. AFTER THE POWER

All day, two young black workers, Ike Shorter and Larry Carter had locked themselves into a wire cage housing a main power switch that controlled a welding assembly line. Protected from forcible eviction by hundreds of supporters, they succeeded in keeping the line shut idling the entire plant until their three demands had been met: 1) a notoriously vicious, racist supervisor, Woolsey, be immediately fired; 2) no firing, discipline, or other reprisals against any worker who participated in the action; and 3) the plant manager commit himself to the first two points, in writing, in the presence of the workers participating in the action.

As soon as the seizure began, a steady stream of UAW officials tried to persuade the workers to give up their protest and let the union "handle" the problem. The workers held fast and stayed united, both against Chrysler and against the pressures from their union officials.

Once the protest was underway, the workers agreed there needed to be a signed statement promising no reprisals. Ending the takeover without such a statement would guarantee that some workers would be fired. The union officials who urged the workers to go home knew this too, but it didn't seem to bother them.

On that glorious day, Chrysler rank and file enthusiasm throughout Detroit was so great vice-president Frazer felt compelled to give Ike and Larry a compliment saying: "They get an 'A' for ingenuity." His true feelings about the Jefferson action were much more hostile. But he kept them to himself for several weeks before finally letting them out during the Mack strike.

The "Detroit News" also gave the story front page headline treatment. Their lead article began less like a news story and more like a front page editorial: "The big question today is whether Chrysler Corp.—in capitulating to demands of two workers—has set the pattern for work stoppages of the future."

In the days to follow, both GM and Ford publicly criticized Chrysler for meeting the workers' demands. Ford's director of labor relations, Sidney F. McKenna stated: "We believe very strongly there is no virtue in rewarding a resort to self-help. We realize that unadjusted complaints can lead to frustration. But it is self-defeating when workers take matters into their own hands."

The UAW, of course, when it was first built by workers, was nothing more or less than an organization whose purpose was to help workers take matters into their own hands. Over the years, the UAW because of the corruption of its leadership, has become the opposite: an organization committed to help the corporations keep workers from doing things for themselves.

And now, to the dismay of the corporations, workers were again experimenting with taking matters back into their own hands with sit-down strikes and plant occupations just like when they first organized the UAW.

Back in 1937, following the UAW-led sit-down strike at Chevy Flint, a participant expressed the feelings that drove the workers into action: "We were treated like a bunch of dogs in the shop and we resented it so much that the people with principle were grabbing for anything to try and establish themselves as men with a little dignity."

These same words could have been used by Jefferson workers to explain their actions. Involved was much more than a gripe with a single racist supervisor. According to Shorter, old workers as well as young workers,

white workers as well as black workers, all joined together in support. At shift change time, several hundred second shift workers entered the plant, joined the throng at the power cage, and vowed they too would stay until the demands had been met.

Few of these second shift workers had any personal experience with Woolsey. They joined the protest to protest the conditions under which they had to work and to vent their anger at all the crap and indignities they had been forced to swallow as autoworkers.

2. PRESSURE BUILDS IN THE METAL SHOP

During the month that led up to the Jefferson power switch takeover, Supervisor Woolsey had gotten a lot of attention from workers in the first shift metal shop where he held sway. They had filed grievances demanding he be removed.

A petition asserting this demand was also circulated. Two hundred and fourteen workers, 70% of Woolsey's department, committed their signatures. Union officials on many different levels had been talked to. After all this had failed to have a hint of an effect, direct action was taken. The plant was shut down.

When Chrysler was finally forced to fire Woolsey, they stated he had been found guilty of "company personnel policy violations." This is unfair. Woolsey did not stand out because he violated the company policies. What distinguished him was that he carried out Chrysler's anti-worker policies with an unusual vigor and enthusiasm.

Woolsey had been a rising young star within Chrysler management. He had hired in as a line foreman in 1968. By 1973, he had already moved up past the rank of general foreman, and had served a stint in the labor relations department. Just months prior to the power cage incident, Woolsey had been sent into the spot welding section of the metal shop as a special trouble shooter with rank just beneath superintendent. His specific instructions were to speed up production and tighten discipline. "I didn't go in as a free agent," Woolsey was quoted as saying, "I was following orders and being instructed by very capable persons."

When Woolsey was first assigned to the metal shop, the feeder line was running an average 100 jobs per day behind the rate Chrysler was shooting for. Within two months, Woolsey brought the department up to scheduled production rates.

He was a "speedup, drive your ass off, fire anyone who doesn't go along with the program" type of supervisor. His specialty was removing all the benches from the area so that workers couldn't sit down even if the line stopped. He bragged about the way he kept the workers moving all the time. He bragged about how much production increased since he took over the department. When workers complained about the treatment he dished out, when they demanded he be removed, he would respond with an arrogant laugh: "I'll still be here after you're long gone."

In Woolsey's words, the company "was well aware of the improvement.. I was complimented as closely as a compliment can come from a boss."

Although Woolsey was a racist through and through, white workers understood that his racism was just one part of his total contempt for all workers. And to the 80% of Jefferson's production workers who are black, the racism and the oppressive working conditions are all part of a total package.

The Jefferson plant is located in the ghetto. To most of the workers, the

conditions and treatment there are part and parcel of ghetto life in Detroit.

Harassment, arbitrary discipline, all wrapped up in a large dose of racism, these were just means to Woolsey's end. He was Chrysler's man. But after two months of his mad dog regime, the workers revolted.

3. BEHIND THE JEFFERSON STRIKE

To an outsider looking in, it may have appeared that the blow-up in Woolsey's department was an isolated happening—that the real underlying cause was conflicts of personality and temperament. In truth, the Woolsey incident was just the tip of an iceberg.

At the time of the sit-down, a plant-wide speedup campaign had been going on at Jefferson for a year. Starting in the summer of 1972, Chrysler had been making a special effort to raise its profits by driving workers as hard as it felt it could get away with.

In doing this, they were following the lead set by industry pace-setter, General Motors. Prettily called a "productivity drive", it was just a good old fashioned speedup.

Summer 1972, the line speed had been increased. Christmas 1972, they upped it again. They went from 56½ jobs per hour to 65½. Total plant manpower was increased from 5400 to 5900. This means that production had been upped 16%, while manpower only went up 9%. There had been a speedup of 7% between summer 1972 and summer 1973.

The speed up had not been accomplished by any new labor saving devices or technological improvements—it was achieved by tightening up discipline and driving the workers harder. The results: greater profit margins for Chrysler, greater wear and tear on the muscles, nerves, and stamina of the workers. Chrysler wasn't satisfied. All attempts were being made to push further

Even before the 7% speedup, the Jefferson workers were under tight job pressure. In general terms, 7% speedup meant losing around 4 seconds a job . Say,working at your normal pace, you used to have on the average 3 seconds left over between jobs.Under such conditions, a slight slip-up and you get thrown into the hole. On this job, a 7% speed-up mans that you're **always** fighting your way out of the hole.

Of course, the 7% figure is just an average. The speedup affected every worker differently. Some did OK, some were forced to do the very same job they used to do at the new line speed.

The Jefferson workers resisted as best they could. Many just couldn't keep up. Right after Christmas, management began a heavy wave of discipline and firings. The workers responce was unplanned, uncoordinated and sporadic. No leadership came from the union officials. Finally on March 7, 1973, there was a walkout.

Unofficial strikes are usually very short. This was one of the first few times in a decade that an auto wildcat strike, supported by none of the local unions official leadership, stretched on for days. The plant shut down on both shifts for four consecutive workdays.

The strike began when a motor line worker (department 9171) was fired for not doing extra work added to his job. It was the motor line, on both shifts, that shut the plant. These workers enter Jefferson through the Freud Street gate. Before the starting time for each shift, workers gathered in front of the gate until a large crowd congregated. Then everybody went home.

Strike leaflets were written by Jefferson workers but handed out by

friends. This was done because any Chrysler worker seen distributing a leaflet encouraging an unofficial strike would be automatically fired.

Only motor line workers stayed out. But they were just about solid 100%. Chrysler had to send the workers from other departments home. On Thursday, March 8, the day after the strike began, Chrysler began firing workers for the walkout. Friday, UAW Local 7 officials distributed a leaflet denouncing the strike and ordering strikers back to work. It's headline: "Walkouts Unauthorized Strike Must Stop!!!!" The leaflet stated in part: "Our Union has a machinery when management goes too far—a strike machinery where every worker in the plant is called on to vote a 'yes' strike vote authority to the Local Union. That's the Union's job. As we told you in the leaflet yesterday, we are in the process of getting that job done—and a few people plotted and decided that the plant would not go back to work; that this was the time for revolution and revolt they did."

"The only trouble is they have succeeded in getting eight more people discharged! The company refuses to negotiate while wildcat strikes are taking place."

"...Organize your intelligence—do not act like a faceless group—we are not faceless—we are human beings who can use our intelligence to control our destiny. **Let us be one—go back to work on your respective shifts and we will go to work on this company with your backing.**"

The motor line still refused to go back. They did not consider themselves a faceless mob. They blamed the company, not the strike leaders for the firings and for the conditions that had forced them to walk out. The unofficial walkout was a response to a long history of union inaction and ineffectiveness. Nothing in the leaflet reestablished confidence in the union leadership.

In a good number of departments throughout the Jefferson Plant on Friday, workers angrily discussed the local's leaflet while waiting around for management to send them home. In several different areas, workers collected up piles of the leaflets and contemptuously set them afire.

No signs of visible opposition to the strike could be seen on the part of the Jefferson workers. Only the company and the UAW officials were against it.

The strike was finally broken on the second shift Monday. The local brought out sound trucks and mobilized both local officials and UAW International staff members. With Chrysler photographers snapping pictures, the officials approached individual workers and personally escorted them into the plant. All but the fired workers and 30 or 40 others eventually went in.

During this time, workers took special note of one of Chrysler's photographers because of his exceptionally obnoxious and agressive behavior. He worked for the Labor Relations Department. It was only after this individual had been transferred back to supervision that his name became widely known. His name was Tom Woolsey.

Even after getting the workers back in the plant, Chrysler still had a hard time getting the line started up. Across Jefferson Ave. from the Motor Line, workers in the second shift Metal Shop sat down and refused to start work. It was an act of solidarity and a clear demonstration that the struggle was plant wide—that the problems facing the workers were plant wide. Only after company and union officials together went around, spoke individually to workers who were sitting down and intimidated them, was Chrysler able to start up the line. Most likely this act of solidarity convinced Chrysler to go easy on further firings.

Ex-Superintendent Woolsey plays fingerman during Jefferson wildcat.

Before and even during the strike, when workers complained to their union leaders about the incredible line speed, and demanded action they were told by their local president, Sammy Bellamo: "The union can't do anything about that. Our hands are tied. It's a company perogative."

On the Sunday following the end of the strike, Local 7 had its regular monthly membership meeting. The hall was full. It was the first time in two years that there was a quorem present at a local meeting.

Under pressure from the workers, President Bellamo finally stated he agreed that a strike might be needed. He promised the membership to call a special meeting of the local executive board to set a date for a strike vote. This calmed the meeting down.

Instead, the local leadership mailed out a four page statement to the home of every Local 7 member further denouncing the strike. Its tone was set early: "What happened, its effects on the workers compounded by the several days of chaos and confusion, has left many of the members of Local 7 hazy on the actual facts of exactly what took place. Discharges, short paychecks, people who have nothing to do with solving our problems thrusting their uninvited views upon us—all contributed to the chaos and confusion to the detriment of the members of Local 7."

In a rambling and self-serving account of the "actual facts," the statement argued that the walkout had been a conspiracy perpetrated by a rank and file caucus then active in the plant: the United Justice Caucus.

The local leadership charged: "With eight people discharged as a result of the unauthorized stoppages, a political group in this local union in league with other political forces deliberately sought to create chaos and confusion at Local 7 to achieve their political purposes...We charge a deliberate conspiracy by this political group to discredit the Local 7 leadership at the expense and sacrifice of the workers at the Chrysler Jefferson plant."

But the statement goes on. It explains and justifies the restrictions on the right to strike contained in the contract, denouncing anyone who wants to get around these restrictions as tampering with the workers and helping the company.

"This...union contract does not permit the union to strike over individual discharges...If strikes were to be legally authorized under the contract for individual discharge cases, with the number of people who get discharged from day to day for many routine reasons, we could then be required to have strikes continuously. **This has never worked in ANY UNION anywhere! Experience has taught us it can't work!"** This statement was written under the direct guidance of the International union and shows us exactly how those people think.

Sometimes, out of weakness, a union leadership must accept contracts that include written limitations on the rights of the workers. Under such circumstances, it is the union leadership's OBLIGATION TO HELP THE WORKERS FIND WAYS TO GET AROUND THESE RESTRICTIONS.

Instead, the UAW leadership always ends up acting as attorney and spokesman for the corporation. They not only enforce the restrictions limiting workers rights written into the contract, they justify these restrictions as representing good unionism. Finally they denounce as splitters those who disagree with their leadership.

Contrary to the statement's double-talk, the right to strike over discharge and discipline cases does not mean an automatic strike every time a worker is fired. It **does** mean the union reserves the right to use the strike weapon over discharge cases when the union decides it is wise to do so.

In the life of a union every fight over speedup and discriminatory treatment, every fight against mad-dog foremen and intimidation and harassment of workers who insist on their rights, becomes, finally, a fight against discharges.

If the company is free to fire who they want when they want, free to drag out the grievance procedure for years, free to force any worker they choose to live on unemployment checks (and that only after a six week penalty), free to force workers to come crawling back on their hands and knees (few can afford to hold out in hope of winning an umpire decision **and** back pay), if the company can do all this and if the union leadership states publicly it believes the company **should** have these rights, then this union leadership is peacing its membership at the mercy of the company.

Even a half-way decent union leadership must be prepared to fight against discharges up to and including strike action if necessary. It must be prepared to find a way around contract restrictions. This is the only way the membership can defend itself against a company offensive. Otherwise the company can fire at will and then fired workers become hostages in the company's hands: to break struggles, force concessions, and intimidate workers who wish to stand up.

The United Justice Caucus at Local 7 wrote a response to the local leadership's statement. It said in part: "The leadership says that they want

unity in the local. We say what kind of unity? In the Army there is unity under the CO. In jail there is unity under the warden. This isn't the kind of unity we want for Local 7.

"When the leadership of a union fights as hard as it can for its membership, it's the duty of the rank and file to back them up right down the line. If the leadership fails to do its job, the rank and file has no alternative but to take matters into its own hands."

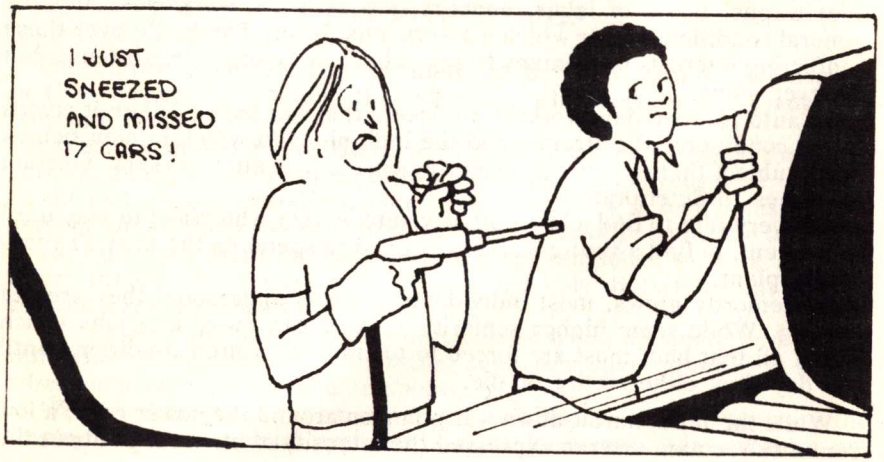
During the wildcat, and during the period of anger that immediately followed, the local leadership denounced the "anarchistic" unauthorized strike. They urged workers to follow the procedure. They explained patiently that it would require a democratic strike vote to authorize a strike. They even promised to hold such a vote. But when the time came, they refused to hold a democratic strike vote.

Their behavior showed Chrysler the union leaders would not lead a fight against the speedup. What's more, if the workers tried to fight the speedup on their own, the union officials would join Chrysler in breaking the struggle.

Chrysler correctly interpreted this as a green light to let mad-dogs like Woolsey run wild. Woolsey's reign of terror was an experiment. Chrysler wanted to see just how far they could get away with pushing things. Four months later, on July 24, the power cage takeover gave Chrysler its answer.

But workers are very much weakened when forced to defend themselves by taking the struggle outside the union. Workers are weakened when forced to carry out a struggle against both the company and the union leadership at the same time. Chrysler will keep the upper hand until a union is rebuilt which gives day to day leadership—in fights against racist harassment, speedup, arbitrary discipline, firings and every other abuse bosses try to heap on workers.

The UAW has fallen far from what it once promised to be. It once inspired the following words from a Flint autoworker who had originally opposed both the union and the great Flint sit-down strike of 1937, but changed his mind, becoming a union man: "The inhuman speed is **no more**. We have a voice, and slowed up the speed of the line. And are now treated as human beings and not as part of the machinery. The high pressure is taken off...It clearly proves that united we stand, divided or alone we fall."



2. Class Traitors In Solidarity House

Every workplace is the scene of continual warfare between the worker and the boss. Sometimes there are periods of truce, sometimes the battle simmers and bubbles just beneath the surface, sometimes it erupts into the open.

The company has one single over-riding desire: to maximize its profit. Its goal is to get out the greatest amount of production at the lowest cost. The workers goal is to be able to live decent human lives, on and off the job, with dignity and self respect. The main desires of the company and those of the working people conflict.

Over the years, these conflicts have expressed themselves in struggles over wages, hours of labor, benefits, job security, workloads, and the general conditions under which workers must labor. The battle over these conflicting interests takes many forms: it becomes more or less intense, but it never stops.

In auto plants today, workers are losing this war badly. When it comes to the conditions, the strains, and the indignities to which human beings must subject themselves day after day on the job, auto workers' position continues to deteriorate.

It is very rare to find a low seniority auto worker who plans to stay until retirement, to find a young worker resigned to spending the next 30 years in the plant.

As seniority grows, most individuals come to understand they are not leaving. While some higher seniority workers can move into jobs which aren't all that bad, most are forced to tolerate the rotten conditions until the day they either retire or die.

While the Jefferson sit-down was going on around the power cage, a low seniority Vietnam veteran expressed the intensity of his feelings about the

conditions of work. "A year ago when I got out of the service," he said, "I thought Vietnam was the worst place in the whole world. This god damn hole is worse." An auto retiree, when asked by a journalist if he was proud of the years he had put in the plants, he replied: "yes,—proud that I pulled through."

1. WHOSE SIDE ARE THEY ON?

For many years now, the entire UAW leadership has refused to lift a finger to lead or aid struggles to improve and humanize conditions. Instead, they have helped the companies take away many of the rights workers won in the 1930's and 40's auto battles.

Many workers believe the top UAW leadership have been out of the plants for so long they don't know or don't remember how bad conditions can get. But in truth, even the lame excuse of ignorance won't hold water.

Let no one be fooled. The top UAW leadership knows exactly how bad the conditions are in the plants. They help the companies maintain these abominable conditions, not out of ignorance, but out of deliberate policy. They have agreed to give the companies a free hand to run the plants as they like, to uphold and defend what has come to be called: "the company's perogatives."

John Anderson, a retired president of UAW Local 15, and a long time champion of the rights of workers has provided documentary evidence of the fact that the UAW is far from ignorant of conditions. Anderson is editor of a pamphlet entitled: "Working Conditions in GM: A Birds Eye View", published by the United National Caucus of the UAW. In it he reprints extensive sections of documents produced in 1964 by the research staff of the UAW's GM Department, then headed by Leonard Woodcock.

Copies of the original documents were sent out to the leadership of GM locals in June and July of 1964. Their contents were kept secret for many years, not only from the general public, but from the UAW membership as well.

The UAW leadership was embarrassed to publicly provide evidence that they know just how bad things are and still refuse to do anything to improve conditions. Anderson has done us all a service by bringing these documents into the open.

2. LIFE IN THE PLANTS

The following quotes from the findings of the UAW research department in 1964 describe conditions that all of us who work in the plants are thoroughly familiar with:

"Workers in too many General Motors plants have been forced to perform their jobs in dirty and filthy conditions...Employees were working on oil and grease coated machines surrounded by a foggy mist. Their persons and clothing were covered with a mixture of perspiration and oil."

"In other situations employees have been compelled to work in areas where fumes, dirt, smoke or lead were not only distasteful but were a definite hazard to health..."

"A frequent problem is encountered in securing adequate and proper ventilation. Complaints must be raised again and again in order to secure relief even on a partial and temporary basis."

"When temperatures or weather conditions are abnormal, the employees face a special problem. All too frequently, Management not

only will not agree to shut the plant down early to provide relief, but will even insist on working overtime despite the pleas of the Local Union and the groans of the workers in the plant."

"Many employees upon reporting to some plant hospitals for treatment are ridiculed by the hospital staff..."

"Temporary or probationary employees are particularly vulnerable to the never ending production drives of the Local plant Managements. Without protection, the unhappy probationer has little choice but to attempt to achieve the standard which is set for the operation. Failure to keep up means discharge.

"All too often when a seniority employee lodges a complaint about the standard on his operation a hapless temporary employee will be assigned to perform it..."

"Often when an employee dares to protest his work load he will be threatened by supervision with immediate transfer to the Siberia of a dirty or filthy operation...Other employees who claim their job is improperly established are given the I-T-D treatment of being interviewed, threatened, and disciplined..."

The report also includes a very accurate and damning portrayal of conditions that assembly line workers must endure:

"Any mention of working conditions cannot be separated from the basic problem of how much work an employee can be forced to perform during the course of the day. Standards established in the various plants of the Corporation are notorious for their failure to include any allowance for fatigue. Employees who work on heavy jobs, hot operations, or on conveyor and assembly lines are expected to perform at the same pace during the entire work day. Although an employee works eight, ten or twelve hours without letup he is expected to perform at the same high peak of efficiency during every single hour. No recognition is given what-so-ever to the plain and simple fact that workers become tired when subjected to the forced work pace in effect in the Corporation plants...In the vast percentage of cases the employee is chained to his particular operation. His movements are confined to a few feet up and down the assembly line. He is not free to engage in any form of the normal releases common to other workers. Should he encounter difficulty with a particular element of his job he loses line position since the conveyor always keeps running with no sympathy for his individual problems. If he leaves his work place to go for a drink of water he must increase his tempo in order to 'stay out of the hole.' Even in those situations where he straightens up in order to ease aching muscles he must pay the penalty of lost position, for the rule of the day is 'the line must never stop.' Simple acts such as adjusting gloves or aprons, cleaning his safety glasses, or blowing his nose all mean that he must work harder to make up for the lost time...In every such instance any momentary pause or loss of work time has to be made up in some fashion. As he completes one operation there is another and ever another bearing down on him..."

The UAW research department document also shows that the UAW top leadership is aware of the relationship between local union leaders and plant management in dealing with working conditions. It recognizes that "harsh restrictions place the Union at a distinct disadvantage in the day to day bargaining at the all-important plant level."

But it goes on to say: "When trouble occurs in the plant or when there are threats of unauthorized strike action local Management willingly provides the President of the Local with stature and responsibility. Many are the Local Presidents who have been awakened in the wee hours of the

morning and summoned to the plant when it suited Management's purpose."

"Once the crisis ended, however, the Local President was quickly put in his place—until the next time."

The document fails to mention who it is that calls the Local Union President in the "wee hours" demanding he get down to the plant to help management put the workers down. At least in Detroit, the way it usually works is the following: first plant management calls up UAW top headquarters Solidarity House and complains to International union officials that the workers are getting out of hand. It is Solidarity House who then calls the local officers demanding they help management bring things back under control.

Conditions in the plants are bad, and over the past few years they have been getting worse. For many years, UAW officials have shown little willingness or ability to lead an effective fight to change these conditions. They have been more effective in helping management keep workers from getting together to protest or challenge them. The mobilization of 1,000 goons at the Mack plant to break a workers strike sparked by serious health and safety problems was nothing other than an expression on a higher and more dramatic level of the policies that most UAW officials have been following for a long time.

The fight of American workers to build unions took years of bitter struggle and untold sacrifice. Company thugs, the police, and on a number of occasions state national guard units and even the U.S. Army were all used to attack workers in their struggle for unionism. Many were killed. In fighting to build the unions, workers were striving to liberate themselves.

Over the years, company oriented sellouts have taken over the American unions. Working people must learn to understand how and why this happened so that we can take our unions back, and transform them into a fighting organization to defend the true interests of workers against profit hungry corporations.

3. CLASS COLLABORATION

One old timer who's been through a thousand fights in the union and truely hates today's top UAW leadership has a rap he never tires of running. Its a comparison between factory workers and prisoners of war, which, although not perfect, is very revealing. Here's how it goes: "Say you're a prisoner of war and your captor makes a deal to permit you and other prisoners certain rights and privileges providing you all promise not to escape. Of course you agree. A chance comes to escape. Are you honor bound to live up to your promise?Hell no. You might be afraid to take the risk involved in escaping. You might fear that your escape may lead to retaliation against other prisoners. All these are legitimate concerns. But you have no moral responsibility **to your captor** not to escape."

The rap goes on: "Say the prisoners have designated leaders. The leaders give their word to the enemy that there will be no escapes. Prisoners try to escape anyway. The leaders join with the enemy in breaking the escape attempt stating that they are honor bound to keep their word to the enemy. In reality they are more concerned with keeping the status and priveleges of their role as recognized leaders. There is no honor in such an act. It is nothing short of collaborating with the enemy, acting

the role of traitor. Today's UAW leaders are nothing less than class traitors."

For many years now, top UAW officials have worked closely with the company to set up and maintain a situation in which the workers could be kept under control. The one man, more than anyone else who directed this effort was the late president of the UAW, Walter Reuther. At the time of Reuther's death, Chrysler vice-chairman Virgil Boyd was quoted in the New York times as saying: "Its taken a strong man to keep the situation under control. I hope that whoever his successor is can exercise great internal discipline." Reuther's successors have done all they could to try and keep the workers under control, but things are rapidly getting out of hand for them. The Jefferson Plant flareups seemed as an inspiration to workers and as a preview of things to come.

4. THE UNION'S INSPIRATION

News of the great workers' victory at Jefferson following the power cage takeover surged through every auto plant in Detroit. The Jefferson workers had shut it down, and more improtant, they won. It was a day of bitter-sweet victory. "I just walked through the plant," said one young Chrysler worker who had a reputation as a fighter. "Every time I saw somebody I knew, we just smiled and showed each other the fist. You didn't have to say anything."

In all the plants, workers were joking about finding the main power switch. But there was the half serious wish that it was more than a joke. The Jefferson victory had been a demonstration that it is possible for workers, through unity and struggle, to actually force the monster, Chrysler Corporation, to its knees. "It was like a miracle," recalled a spot welder from Chrysler's Lynch Road Assembly plant. "We all believed it happened, and that it was fantastic. But absolutely nobody believed it could ever happen here, happen to us."

Everywhere in Chrysler they were saying: "Man, those people at Jefferson are something else. They've really got their thing together. It could never happen in this plant." In the Detroit area General Motors and Ford plants they were saying: "That's Chrysler for you."

Many conversations struck a sad, almost angry note. A Chrysler Mack Ave. worker complained just weeks before the Mack sit-down: "These god damn people at Mack are the sorriest bunch there is. They'll never stick together like happened at Jefferson. They'll all just keep on taking this shit until the day they die and they'll never do nothing about it."

While the Jefferson sit-down had given Detroit area auto workers a fleeting glimpse, and even a taste of Workers' Power, it served, at the same time, to remind workers of the state of powerlessness we have been reduced to in the plants.

The Jefferson incident reminded many of the very oldest workers of the union's early years. It was an act of real unionism, of solidarity. There was a time when a lot of workers viewed unionism as something to believe in. Unions once represented the hope that it was possible for workers to achieve strength through unity, that it was possible for workers to band together to improve life.

Most autoworkers today would be amazed if they listened closely to the words of the UAW official theme song: "Solidarity Forever." Knowing today's union, it is almost impossible to imagine a UAW able to inspire in its members the vision expressed by that song. "When the Union's

inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,/ There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun./ Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?/ But the Union makes us strong."

The song concludes: "In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold,/ Greater than the might of armies magnified a thousand fold./ We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old,/ For the Union makes us strong."

Ever since there has been giant industry such as auto, steel and rubber, there have been heroic workers' struggles fought. In the days before auto was unionized a dramatic struggle like the one at Jefferson would have been viewed by all as part of the struggle for a union. Ike Shorter and Larry Carter stand for the real traditions and inspirations of the UAW, not the well paid, slick talking UAW bureaucrats. News of the shut down sent out a ripple of excitement throughout the plants because it showed an example of real unionism in action.

Workers everywhere were inspired with the desire to strike out against their own oppression. But we were also reminded of our pitiful lack of a fighting organization through which we could achieve the kind of unity that would make us strong, that would enable us to continue the fight and press it forward. The victory reminded us, not just of our power, but of our weakness as well. It reminded everybody of the sad state our union is in. It reminded us that union power does not exist in the plants, that it must be rebuilt.

The UAW has a newspaper called "Solidarity"; it has a headquarters called "Solidarity House". But every day, when UAW members punch into the plant, we know that time and again we will be forced to face the monster Chrysler, not in Solidarity with our fellow union members, but as individuals. There is no force on earth weaker than the feeble strength of one. But today's UAW leadership does all in its power to keep us from getting together to create the power of unity.

3. Detroit Forge Strike

1. DEADLY WORKING CONDITIONS TRIGGER STRIKE

In the aftermath of the Jefferson plant takeover, the Detroit area Chrysler plants continued to simmer. In two weeks time, Tuesday August 7, the next big explosion happened.

This time the scene was Chrysler's Detroit Forge plant on Lynch Road. At 11:00 p.m. the midnight shift normally enters the plant. That night it stayed out. And for the rest of the week, no worker entered the plant with the exception of supervisors, some probationary workers with less than 90 days seniority, and union officials.

The Forge plant had been operating continuously for six months, seven days a week, on all three shifts. During this time period, the majority of the plant's workers had been on a compulsory seven day work week. The incredible fatigue leading to exhaustion and irritability on the part of workers and foremen alike is just the most obvious effect of this incredible overtime.

Accidents rose dramatically not just because of numbed alertness.

Most kinds of maintenance and repair are only possible when the machinery is idle. But Chrysler was straining to get out every ounce of production possible from the Forge plant. Production was being pressed to levels higher than the capacity the plant and machinery had been designed to turn out. Repair and maintenance of the machinery and plant were kept down to the minimum level required to keep the operation producing. As a result, filth and safety hazzards multiplied.

Upon hearing about the strike, UAW vice president Douglas Fraser was quoted as saying: "This has caught me absolutely cold. I had no hint of any

difficulties at Local 47. Why didn't our own people know?" The workers, of course, knew well about the problems.

The Detroit Free Press of August 9, reports a meeting of 250 Forge workers at their local union hall on Wednesday morning soon after the beginning of the strike. The workers had no difficulty expressing themselves about the safety conditions: "Tony McLennett, 35, a machinery repairman whose finger was crushed in a crane accident Sunday, told the group he had complained Friday that the crane was not operating properly—and nothing was done...On Sunday, McJennett said, the crane jerked upward without warning as he tried to disengage a chain. 'I thought I'd lost four fingers,' he said. 'I was scared. I prayed to God I wouldn't lose my hand.' He expects part of the middle finger on his right hand to be amputated Thursday.

" 'You never know what's gonna happen from day to day, the safety conditions are so bad,' said McJennett, who has worked in the plant for eight years. 'This has been going on for years—today its mentioned and tomorrow its forgotten.'

"Another man at Wednesday's meeting said he had been called to install a guard on a conveyer belt—after it crushed the arm of Harvey Brooks on July 23.

"Workers at the meeting complained about floors slick with oil and water, electrical wires that were not insulated, faulty equipment. One man said his wife had brought his children, aged 6 and 4, to the plant to pick up a paycheck from him: My kids broke out in tears. They said: 'Why are you so dirty—so filthy?' "

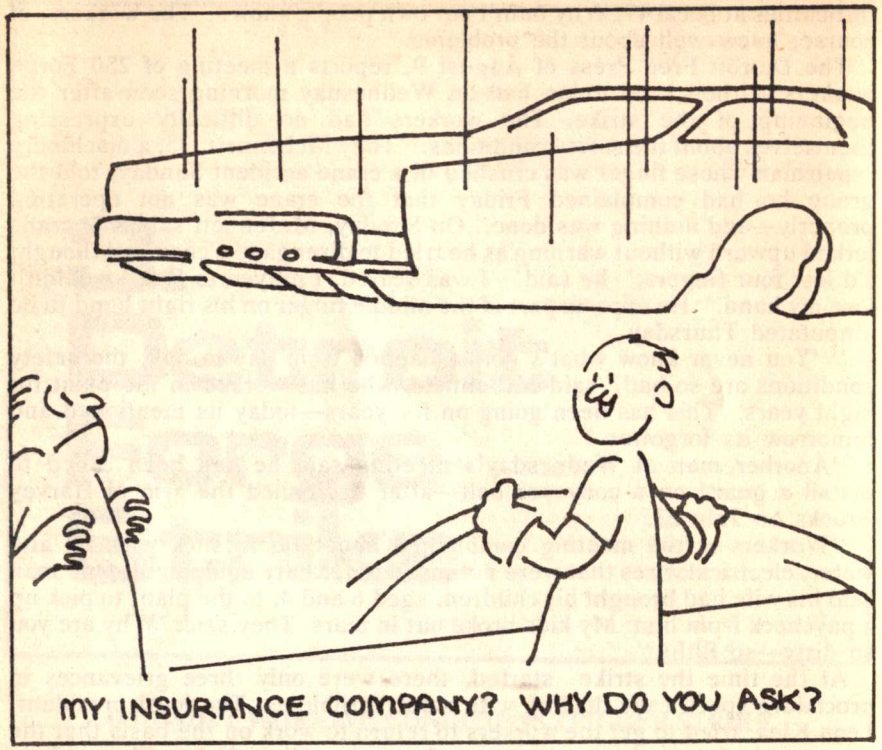
At the time the strike started, there were only three grievances in procedure specifically dealing with safety problems. The local president, Leon Klea, tried to get the workers to return to work on the basis that the company had agreed to replace some burned out light bulbs. The workers responded by telling him to "take a vacation." The only reason there weren't more safety grievances in the procedure was because local union officials had not been willing to write them. The strike continued.

Chrysler began putting the heat on the UAW officials to get the workers back. Company spokesmen issued a statement that if the strike continued 40,000 Chrysler workers would be out of work. It was at this point that Klea and other local union leaders suddenly expressed their militant concern with the health and safety problems in the plant, revealing that they knew how bad things really were.

The local union leaders dispatched the following telegram to the U.S. Department of Labor's office of safety and health: "Urgently request safety inspection of Chrysler Detroit Forge Plant which has forced 1,500 workers out of the plant with the immediate threat that deadly working conditions may set off a chain reaction that could involve 40,000 other Chrysler workers.

"Management's refusal to correct outrageous conditions is responsible for the plant closing. Three times within a two week period, a defective overhead crane dumped tons of steel in pedestrian areas. The inventory of neglect and injuries will be documented and presented to your inspectors. The situation is critical and requires your immediate attention." There was now for the first time recognition that the problem went deeper than burned out lights.

The telegram certainly expressed a mood of extreme urgency on the part of the local union leadership. But the local leadership, and the top UAW officials had not responded to the urgency of "deadly working conditions"



until there was a walkout passively threatening to idle 40,000 workers. If they had, there would never have been need for this unauthorized strike in the first place. The strike was a direct response to the do-nothing policies of union leadership.

2. MIDNIGHT SHIFT STAYS OUT

There had been discontent at the Forge for a considerable time. People were fed up with the unsafe and unhealthy conditions that existed, and the local union officials failure to provide any leadership in combatting these problems. An informal grouping of rank and file workers at the Forge had written a list of demands, mainly dealing with the problems of health and safety, that they wished to see pressed on Chrysler in the local contract negotiations. These demands were presented to local union officials. The workers had also insisted that the local officers consult with the union membership before finalizing their bargaining package. Under pressure, the officers agreed to these consultations, something not usually done in the UAW.

The form that these consultations were to take was a series of meetings at the local hall, one for each shift. The date set was Tuesday, August 7. It was at these meetings that the incidents sparking the Forge strike happened.

On Tuesday morning when the midnight shift got off work, about one third of the shift went to the local hall. A stormy meeting followed. The leadership explained to the ranks exactly what was being asked for in local

contract negotiations—nothing. The ranks responded in anger. In the course of the meeting it became crystal clear that the local union officials were totally unwilling to lead a fight against what even they would later admit were "deadly working conditions", and an "inventory of neglect and injuries".

With the official local union leadership unwilling to lead, rank and file workers had to go it alone. They pledged to one another that they would refuse to go back to work until the Forge plant was cleaned up and safe. That night, the workers who had been at the meeting gathered out in front of the Forge gates. As other midnight shift workers arrived, they were told what was going on. At 11:00 p.m., shift starting time, all the midnight shift workers were still standing outside the plant. The whistle blew, and they all went home.

3. FRASER AND CHRYSLER BREAK STRIKE

During the week, workers gathered at the gates at shift change and turned everyone away. Chrysler went to court and got an injunction against the striking workers, "forbidding striking and the encouragement to and inducement of other workers to strike." In simple English, the injunction was a threat that workers who tried to continue the strike could be thrown in jail. Chrysler also sent out telegrams to 15 Forge workers who had been prominent in the strike informing them that they were fired.

Meanwhile UAW top leadership in the person of Vice President Douglas Fraser joined in the effort to get the plant producing again. Early in the week, Fraser made statements to the effect that dissatisfaction in the plant was not really widespread as proved by the fact that at the time of the strike there was only a total of 17 grievances in the procedure. Also according to the Freepress he publicly asserted that: "When specific complaints are made by workers the company had been quick to try to remedy bad conditions."

It was hard for workers to tell whether Fraser was the boldest liar in a generation, or just ignorant. But in either case, Fraser had to change his tune when he discovered that the Forge workers still wouldn't go back to work despite his claim that management tried to remedy bad conditions.

On Friday, August 10, Fraser announced that there would be a meeting for all Forge workers two days later . He also made a dramatic personal tour of the Forge plant.

The following report is from the Free Press, August 11: "UAW Vice President Douglas Fraser, who had promised to tour the Forge plant Monday made a three-hour impromptu inspection Friday afternoon instead. Fraser said he didn't want to give the company time to clean the plant up for him. They didn't. Oil dripped all over the coat he had just picked up from the dry cleaners. 'I look just like I've been in the coal mines for two years,' Fraser said afterwards. 'No one was working,' he observed, 'so there was no heat, no fumes, no debris flying about. I saw it under the best of circumstances—and the best are not good enough. I saw that the workers have legitimate and pressing grievances,' he said. 'Areas of the plant are unclean. Oil has accumulated, and there's grease on the floor. I'm going to report to the membership Sunday that if these conditions are not corrected forthwith, I'm prepared to authorize a strike.' "

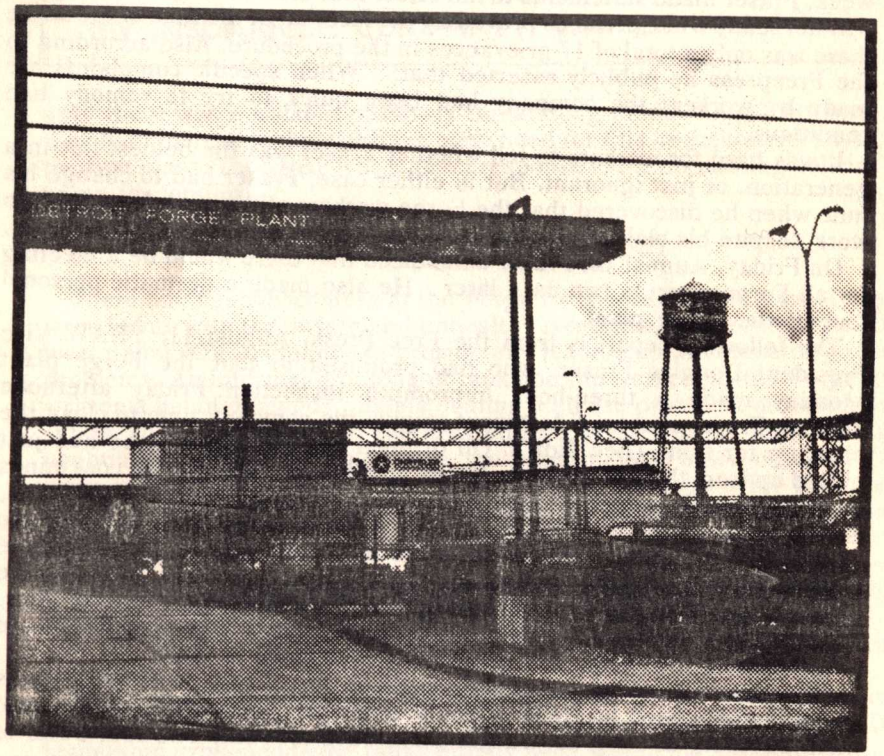
Fraser was sounding almost like a militant. But in fact, his new ploy was one commonly used by UAW officials: when the ranks walk out, promise them anything as long as you get them back to work. The real basis of

Fraser's militant talk was well summarized in a statement in the Detroit News of August 13: "Fraser said he would do everything within his powers of persuasion to get the men back to work. I've done it before,' he said."

At the Sunday meeting, Fraser did do all in his power to convince the workers to go back. Most remained adamant. At a minimum they insisted on guarentees that the workers Chrysler had fired as a result of the walkout be reinstated. As one Forge worker put it, "Now that everybody has come around to admitting how unsafe the conditions are, these guys shouldn't get fired, they should get life-saving medals." The workers knew that going back to work with their leaders fired would be a defeat. Both Chrysler and Fraser knew it too.. After promising that conditions would be improved if workers returned to their jobs, and after threatening mass firings if the strike continued, Fraser called for a vote on returning to work. The press reported the voting as split 50 to 50. But in fact, Fraser lost by a clear margin of at least 60 to 40. Ordering the workers to go back he quickly adjourned the meeting.

Since he lost the vote, Fraser down-played its significance saying that it would have no effect on the walkout. "You can't make an illegal strike legal just by asking people whether they want to go back to work or not."

That night, the court injunctions, the firings, and the pressure from the union leadership payed off for Chrysler. One hundred and thirty-six of the midnight shift workers, or about one third of them returned to work. The strike was broken. By the next day, everybody was back—everybody that is but the accused strike leaders. They remained fired. A year later, three of the strike leaders remain fired with all appeals exhausted.



4. The Mack Wildcat

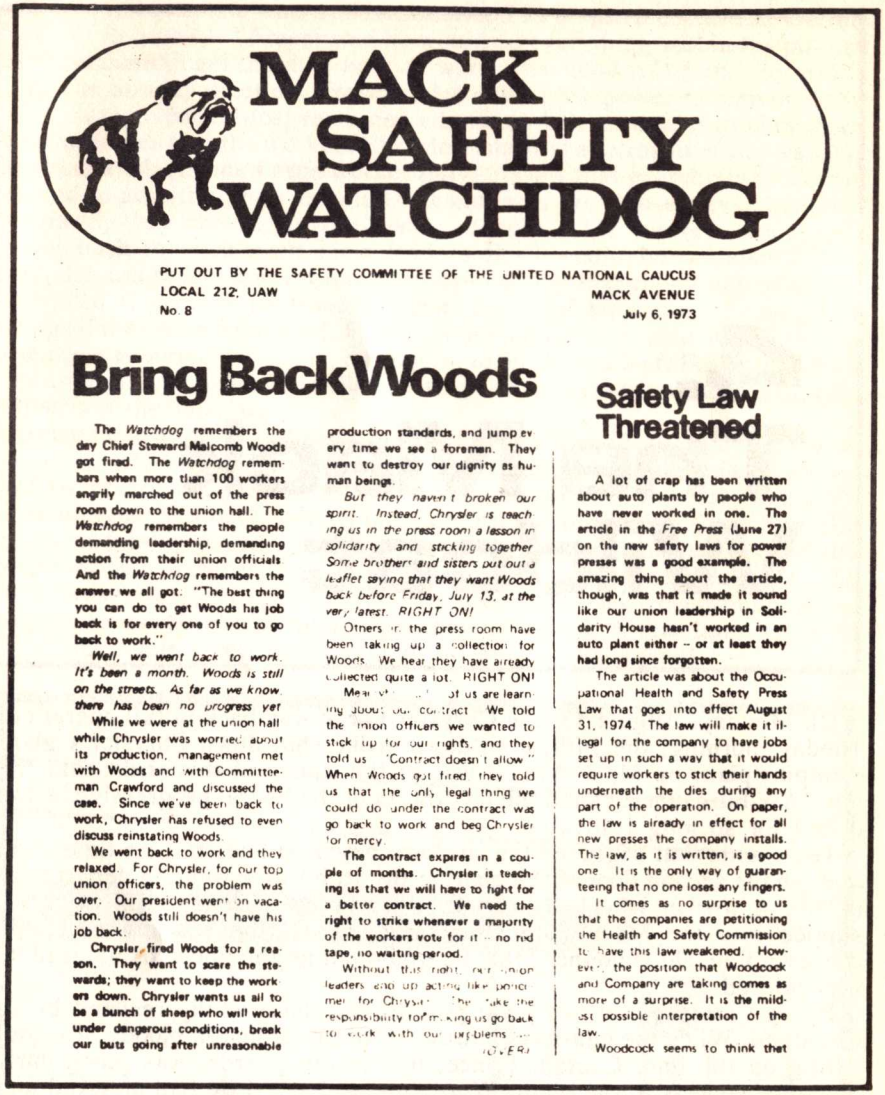
On Monday, August 13, the Chrysler Forge was back in full operation. Tueday morning, the 14th, a sit-down strike shut down Chrysler's giant stamping plant on Mack Ave. It was in the course of this strike that the top UAW bureaucracy shed the last traces of the liberal progressive image it had for so long cultivated.

The events that triggered the sit-down began at line start-up time, 5:30 a.m. on the second floor of the plant in the stub frame welding department (9780). A worker who had been fired a few days earlier, Bill Gilbreth, slipped into the Mack Plant and sat down on the framing assembly conveyor line. He announced that he would not let the line start up until he was rehired.

He was attacked by two plant guards, but successfully resisted being dislodged. When the guards withdrew, Gilbreth, although bloody, was still sitting on the line. Captain Prince, one of the guards, was particularly hated by workers in the plant. Word spread that Prince had attacked and bloodied a worker.

Workers started gathering to find out what was going on. A number of midnight shift press room workers who had finished their jobs early but couldn't punch out until 6:30 a.m., joined the growing crowd. Three Detroit Policemen strode into the plant to remove Gilbreth. Several from the crowd moved, placing themselves between the ploice and the bloody worker. The police withdrew, returning minutes later in a group of fifteen. This time, several hundred workers stepped into their path. The police left and the workers continued standing there. This was the beginning of the sit-down strike.

Chrysler responded by shutting down the entire plant and telling all the workers to go home. Some foremen, in an attempt to get workers out of the plant quickly, spread the rumor that the company had received a telephone



MACK SAFETY WATCHDOG

PUT OUT BY THE SAFETY COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONAL CAUCUS
LOCAL 212, UAW — MACK AVENUE
No. 8 — July 6, 1973

Bring Back Woods

The *Watchdog* remembers the day Chief Steward Malcomb Woods got fired. The *Watchdog* remembers when more than 100 workers angrily marched out of the press room down to the union hall. The *Watchdog* remembers the people demanding leadership, demanding action from their union officials. And the *Watchdog* remembers the answer we all got: "The best thing you can do to get Woods his job back is for every one of you to go back to work."

Well, we went back to work. It's been a month. Woods is still on the streets. As far as we know, there has been no progress yet.

While we were at the union hall while Chrysler was worried about its production, management met with Woods and with Committeeman Crawford and discussed the case. Since we've been back to work, Chrysler has refused to even discuss reinstating Woods.

We went back to work and they relaxed. For Chrysler, for our top union officers, the problem was over. Our president went on vacation. Woods still doesn't have his job back.

Chrysler fired Woods for a reason. They want to scare the stewards; they want to keep the workers down. Chrysler wants us all to be a bunch of sheep who will work under dangerous conditions, break our buts going after unreasonable production standards, and jump every time we see a foremen. They want to destroy our dignity as human beings.

But they haven't broken our spirit. Instead, Chrysler is teaching us in the press room a lesson in solidarity and sticking together. Some brothers and sisters put out a leaflet saying that they want Woods back before Friday, July 13, at the very latest. RIGHT ON!

Others in the press room have been taking up a collection for Woods. We hear they have already collected quite a lot. RIGHT ON!

Meanwhile, all of us are learning about our contract. We told the union officers we wanted to stick up for our rights, and they told us "Contract doesn't allow." When Woods got fired, they told us that the only legal thing we could do under the contract was go back to work and beg Chrysler for mercy.

The contract expires in a couple of months. Chrysler is teaching us that we will have to fight for a better contract. We need the right to strike whenever a majority of the workers vote for it — no red tape, no waiting period.

Without this right, our union leaders end up acting like pansies for Chrysler. They take the responsibility for making us go back to work with our problems [illegible]

(OVER)

Safety Law Threatened

A lot of crap has been written about auto plants by people who have never worked in one. The article in the *Free Press* (June 27) on the new safety laws for power presses was a good example. The amazing thing about the article, though, was that it made it sound like our union leadership in Solidarity House hasn't worked in an auto plant either -- or at least they had long since forgotten.

The article was about the Occupational Health and Safety Press Law that goes into effect August 31, 1974. The law will make it illegal for the company to have jobs set up in such a way that it would require workers to stick their hands underneath the dies during any part of the operation. On paper, the law is already in effect for all new presses the company installs. The law, as it is written, is a good one. It is the only way of guaranteeing that no one loses any fingers.

It comes as no surprise to us that the companies are petitioning the Health and Safety Commission to have this law weakened. However, the position that Woodcock and Company are taking comes as more of a surprise. It is the mildest possible interpretation of the law.

Woodcock seems to think that

bomb threat. Chrysler shut the plant down in fear that when workers in other parts of the plant heard of the sit-down in 9780, they would go there to join it.

In an assembly plant operation like Jefferson, if you stop the line at any point, within a few hours, the entire plant must come to a halt. Not so at Mack. It would have been possible to keep 90% of Mack running indefinitely even with department 9780 shut down. Chrysler closed the plant in an attempt to isolate the protesters.

Parts shortages already existed in the Chrysler system because of the just ended Forge strike. There were not enough engines or torsion bars available. At least for a few days, Chrysler could afford to lose production

at Mack in a way they couldn't during either the earlier strikes at Jefferson and the Forge.

Later that day, Mack workers were being sent home, but not all of them believed the bomb scare hoax. Many heard about things going on in 9780, and went to check it out.

An hour after the plant was closed, there were still hundreds of workers inside. The Mack sit-down strike was on. But what was it over? As one of the first workers who joined the sit-down was later quoted as saying: "Workers don't go on strike just because a fight breaks out between a worker and plant security."

1. WHAT WAS THE STRIKE ABOUT?

There are different versions about what the strike was really about. The UAW bureaucracy, Chrysler, and the mass media all claimed that the strike was nothing more than the action of an organization called WAM (Workers Action Movement). Despite its impressive name, WAM had only two or three members at Mack and no active following.

On August 15, the Free Press refers to the sit-down as "Tuesday's disturbance staged by the Workers Action Movement." On the 16th they say that "both the UAW and Chrysler blamed the take-over on the radical leftist WAM...WAM is the in-plant arm of the Progressive Labor Party which bills itself as a revolutionary Communist organization."

The official UAW leadership version was written up and distributed at the Mack plant following the strike. It was signed by UAW V.P. Doug Fraser, UAW Region 1B Director Ken Morris, and the top four officers of UAW Local 212. The leaflets headline: "MACK PLANT WORKING! WHO GAVE 10 PEOPLE THE RIGHT TO TELL 5,400 WORKERS—'NO BREAD, BABY'?" It stated: "Let's take a look at exactly what has happened. The shutdown of the Mack Ave. plant this week was planned by less than ten people, some of whom don't even work for Chrysler at all. That's by their own admission to the Detroit Free Press.

"Well then, who are they? They've admitted to the Free Press that WAM is led by members of a Communist splinter group that wants to disrupt so they can take over the union and the companies.

"...The decision of that handful of less than ten people from a splinter Communist group kept 5,400 workers at the Mack Ave. plant from their jobs for three days this week. That group of less than ten people didn't even give the 5,400 workers a vote on shutting the plant down and losing pay for each day the plant was kept closed. They didn't give a damn about the workers."

2. WORKERS SIDE OF THE STORY

The majority of the workers who participated in the sit-down and protest have another version of the strike. It is best summarized in the text of a leaflet, adopted at a meeting of workers who were fired following the strike. The leaflet was distributed by fired Mack workers both at Mack Ave. and other Detroit area plants. The leaflet was entitled: **Mack Safety Protest: The Worker's Side of the Story.**

"Television, the newspapers, Chrysler Corporation and our union officials have all been telling the public that all the trouble at the Mack Avenue plant was caused by a handful of outside "trouble-makers." We want to set the record straight.

"At Mack we have been suffering from unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. At least once or twice a month somebody loses a finger or a hand in a press. (We have often asked the company for exact figures, but they have always refused to release this information to the workers.) Oil drips from the presses all over your clothes. Most of the time the floors are oily and slippery. You have to work surrounded by scrap and slugs on which you can slip and fall and which can cut you.

"When it rains outside, it pours inside and you have to work in and walk through puddles everywhere. Stock boxes clog the aisles causing traffic hazards with the hi-los, most of which have faulty brakes. Stacks of steel fall all the time.

"When it's hot outside, it's sizzling inside-particularly in the welding areas where you have to wear heavy protective clothing. The welding fumes are dangerous to health, as are the fumes from the gas hi-los. Welders are always being burned and scarred by the sparks.

"...Foremen encourage unsafe practices in order to get out more production. Workers are forced to go along by means of threats, bribes, and habit. Whenever a worker refuses to place his hands under a die area or to operate an unsafe press, the foreman puts a probationary employee on the job who cannot refuse. The same thing happens when there is an unbalanced load of steel that could fall and crush you at any moment. When we refuse to do an unsafe job, a worker with even less experience is put in our place.

"Time and again workers don't stand up for their rights, even when they are jeapordizing their lives and limbs, because they are afraid of getting fired. The stewards usually don't help because they, too, are afraid of getting fired. Most stewards won't even write grievances. When one press room steward, Malcomb Woods, started backing up his people, he was fired and is still out on the streets even though this happened over two months ago.

"Time and again workers have come to union officials and asked for help with our problems. All we ever hear in return is that we should go back to work and let the officials take care of things. People have been getting fired; conditions have been getting worse—and nobody feels they have anywhere to turn for help. This is what caused the situation at Mack and not a few outside 'trouble-makers.'

"The press, the company and the union officials are all trying to cover up the real issues by saying the whole thing was caused by a small outside group called WAM. The union officials put out a leaflet saying ten ' trouble-makers ' were causing the whole thing.

"Why, then, did it take a thousand union officials from all over the Detroit area to open up the plant? If it was just ten trouble-makers, why was it necessary for the union officials to threaten and beat up any worker who wanted to keep the strike going? Why were so many workers fired?

"Let no one be fooled. Mack workers who participated in and supported the protest did so because of the conditions in the plant. It was not WAM or any other organization that caused the struggle, but rather the anger of Mack workers at our unsafe and inhuman working conditions."

3. TINDER BOX

Two facts seem to support the story of the strike put out by the newspapers, T.V., Chrysler, and the UAW bureaucracy. First, Bill Gilbreth, the man who sat down on the line starting the strike was a

prominent WAM member. Second, WAM leaders were doing all they could to publicly claim credit for the strike as taking place under their auspices.

Some of the news reporters may have been honestly taken in by WAM's claims that it was a WAM strike. But the same could not be said for either Chrysler or the UAW bureaucracy. Both had been watching the Mack plant closely for more than two months. Both knew a tinder-box situation that could ignite at any moment, existed in the plant. Both knew that WAM had little to do with events building to that situation. Both knew that WAM had no real following or support in the plant.

But both the company and the UAW bureaucrats were very happy to spread the story that the whole strike and all the turmoil at Mack was the result of a conspiracy of outside "Communist" trouble makers, who had no concern for the problems or the workers in the plant, and who were causing the plant closure for reasons that had nothing to do with the grievances of Mack workers. In this way, Chrysler could focus attention away from the unbearable butcher-shop conditions that exist in the plant and the UAW officials could focus attention away from their miserable failures in dealing with these problems.

Only a very small handfull of the workers who participated in and made the sit-down possible, had even the slightest idea of what WAM was or stood for. They protested because safety and health conditions in the plant were intolerable, because the union officials were letting it all slide. This time they wanted to make their voices heard. They had tried a dozen other ways; maybe this would work.

4. MACK SAFETY WATCHDOG

Safety has always been an important issue at the Mack plant. This was true before there was a union when the plant was owned by the Briggs Manufacturing Company. "Your History," a Local 212 publication stated, "the Briggs plants were known as 'slaughter houses' and the most popular slogan among the workers was, 'If poison fails, try Briggs'."

The immediate chain of events culminating with the Mack sit-down strike run back about a year. In September 1972, a die-setter was killed in the Mack plant when a bolster plate blew loose and cut off the top of his head.

This event startled into motion a number of workers who had been talking about doing something about unsafe conditions for some time. They decided to go to the next local union meeting and ask for action from the union. At the meeting, a motion was introduced for the local union to set up an emergency safety committee to investigate accidents and their causes, to expose unsafe conditions, to inform the membership, and to propose further action. The motion was ruled out of order by the president.

After this experience several workers decided, if the local won't set up an official committee, we'll set up an unofficial safety committee. The committee was set up, and in December, it published and distributed the "Mack Safety Watchdog" in the plant. In the first issue, the Watchdog explained: "We decided to publish the 'Watchdog' for one purpose: the Mack Avenue Plant is an unsafe and unhealthy place to work...It is our belief that the most important step toward improving unsafe, unhealthy conditions is to have an informed and aware membership in the plant. The 'Watchdog' is designed to help create just that."

The "Watchdog" came out nine times in all prior to the sit-down. It was distributed by workers inside the plant on all three shifts and in most departments. Accidents and their causes were described, hazzards were exposed, workers rights were explained, and all this was accompanied with agitation about the need for unity and joint action.

The paper began having an impact on the Mack workers. This was described in a "Watchdog" dated March 26. "Since the 'Watchdog' first started coming out, people find it easier to demand that scrap and oil be cleaned up, that unsafe loads of steel get straightened out, that welding ventilation equipment work properly, that unsafe press conditions be corrected and so on. We think the Watchdog helps create an atmosphere in which people are more willing to stand up for their rights because they know they are not alone."

But it wasn't until June that things in the plant started coming to a head. By June, Mack had been on continuous, forced overtime for months. Press room workers had been on a seven day a week schedule. The other departments were working only six days, but long hours. Maintenance had broken down in the plant. With the press room running continuously, no repairs or maintenance was performed on hi-los (forklifts) and other equipment, unless they were broken down to the point of not operating. And then only minimum repairs were made.

When scrap handling equipment broke down, scrap would pile up everywhere as the presses kept going. Oil leaks on presses would remain for months . The same with leaks in high pressure air lines that gave off shrill, high-pitched screeching noises, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Brakes weren't holding on most hi-los and other trucks causing accidents in the aisle ways that were clogged with stock. Press brakes were slipping and foremen resisted getting them fixed. Jobs were often set up wrong, sometimes making the work harder or leading to safety hazards.

The Chrysler system, operating at production rates beyond its capacity, was experiencing continual bottlenecks. There were times when shortages of parts produced at Mack were holding up or threatening to hold up production at one of the assembly plants. Superintendants, general foremen and foremen cussing each other out, would concentrate their frustrations on the work crew. The pressure was fantastic. Accidents began to multiply.

5. GREASY PIG WALKS OUT

There was a small walkout of press room second shift workers, on Thursday, June 7. The next day, some of them put out a leaflet to the press room that began: "Things are getting uptight at Mack,...We're getting pushed against the wall, and something has got to give. On Wednesday they tried to fire a couple of hilo drivers and forced the others to stop driving in their defense. At the same time, a woman working on the cab-back line (52) had two fingers cut off due to management negligence. A protective guard that's supposed to be on the press was missing, making the condition an unsafe illegal hazzard. Everyone in the area was upset—except Bill Houston, the general, who was running around trying to force everyone to go right back to work, and making everyone angry.

"Then yesterday, management really provoked the people on the Greasy Pig (line 41). The job was set up all wrong. At the same time they cut back on the number of people, really messing up the job. They couldn't make

production of 437 per hour. At the same time the pigs were stacked about six feet high and people were afraid it was going to fall and bury them in greasy pigs."

The June 7 walkout happened when management tried to discipline workers on the pig line for not working faster. That same day, some die-setters working overtime got into a dispute with high supervision that was hassling them to hurry with the job. In the course of this dispute, they were threatened with firings, and the second shift Chief steward, Malcom Woods was fired.

6. PRESS ROOM GOES OUT

Word didn't reach the plant that the steward was fired until Friday afternoon, June 8, just at the time the "Things are Getting Uptight" leaflet was being handed out. The angry response was a walkout in the press room just after start up time. Hundreds of workers left the plant. What happened next is described in a **Watchdog** dated June 11.

"After the walkout, about 100 people went in an orderly fashion to the union hall and requested to see the president of our local. They wanted to find out what was going to be done about the conditions that forced the people to walk out...They said that number one they wanted the steward rehired and no one else fired. But they said they didn't want to go back to the same lousy hole with the same conditions. The three problems people talked about most were safety, harassment, and Finley (the superintendent).

"...People asked the union officials to shut down the whole plant until we get the improvements we need. The only answer people got from the union leaders was that we were doing things the wrong way. They said it takes a meeting of all Mack workers to take a strike vote. But when asked if the president would set a date for a strike vote meeting, the answer was no. The main thing the union leaders had to say was that everyone should go back to work."

7. REINSTATE MALCOLM WOODS

Following the walkout, the firing of steward Woods and the demand for his reinstatement became symbolic of all the problems at Mack. A few weeks after the walkout, there was still no word on his getting back. A leaflet was distributed in the plant demanding Woods' reinstatement. "The firing of a steward concerns everybody. Its not just one man's job at stake, whether they realize it or not." The leaflet continued: "When Woods started standing up for the people who depended on him, he was eliminated....We are human beings. But without unity, Chrysler considers us no more than numbers...Without unity, we won't have a safe and reasonable job, regardless of pay. We cannot afford a finger, if lost, in a lifetime...So long as Chrysler can get away with firing a steward for representing his people, nobody at Mack can expect any kind of representation."

On Friday, July 13, 45 Mack second shift workers went down to their union hall before work demanding action on the reinstatement of Woods. No word. There was talk of a walk-out, but it didn't materialize.

On Sunday August 5, about 30 Mack workers met, discussing a campaign to force both local and national UAW leaders to fight for a decent contract. Anger at the unsafe conditions in the plant and the stewards'

firing dominated the meeting. Workers agreed that it probably was going to be neccessary to shut down Mack, whether or not the UAW chose Chrysler as the 1973 strike target.

On Friday, August 10, 50 second shift Mack workers picketed their union local hall before work, protesting the lack of action on woods' reinstatement. After picketing, they went inside and met with officers of the local union as well as representatives from both the regional and international UAW staff. Again the workers demanded the union officially shut the plant down until the steward was reinstated and unsafe conditions corrected. Again they demanded an official union strike meeting to discuss the question. Again they were turned down.

Workers at the meeting yelled that the plant would be shut down with or without official union authorization. The charge was made that no union existed inside the plant. Workers were afraid to protest unsafe conditions and stewards refused to even write grievances. Fighting to bring back the fired steward was part of a neccessary struggle to rebuild the union in the plant.

8. CHRYSLER CLEANS UP

Union officials were well aware of the discontent unsafe conditions were breeding. While they tried to say that only a tiny handful were dissatisfied, they knew better. On Friday, August 3, Hank Ghant, president of UAW Local 212, trying to get the pressure off himself, tried to show he really was concerned with the safety problem. He drew a headline in the Free Press: "Gate-Crasher Gripes On Safety at Chrysler." The article began: "A frustrated UAW local president barged into the union bargaining suite Friday during contract talks with Chrysler Corp. and demanded that health and safety problems at the company's Mack stamping plant be corrected immediately...Ghant said he was frustrated in trying to get conditions at the plant corrected and he said workers were threatening a walkout."

In response, the plant was cleaned up over the weekend—but only on the surface. Floors were cleaned, scrap was picked up, and the aisles were cleared. But there was no serious machinery maintenance.

9. THE STAGE IS SET

The next day, on Saturday the 4th, there was a particularly nightmarish press accident. A worker lost all fingers on one hand except one. It was caused because: 1) the automation device that was supposed to remove stock from the press was not operating so the worker had to remove stock by hand, and 2)the press, which had a history of repeating, had never been repaired.

What made the accident stand out though, was that the press stopped in a closed position and the worker stood there for ten minutes with his hand caught in the press. The story went through the press room was that the fingers weren't cut off until after the ten minute wait. Whether or not this was true, workers believed that the fingers were cut off because maintenance was unable to reverse the cycle of the press and management decided to complete the cycle cutting the fingers.

Three days later it rained, flooding the inside of the plant. It was a hot week making the fumes particularly unbearable. By the end of the week, scrap was piling up again, and stock boxes were clogging the aisle. By Tuesday August 14, the stage for the sit-down had been set.

5. The UAW Breaks A Strike

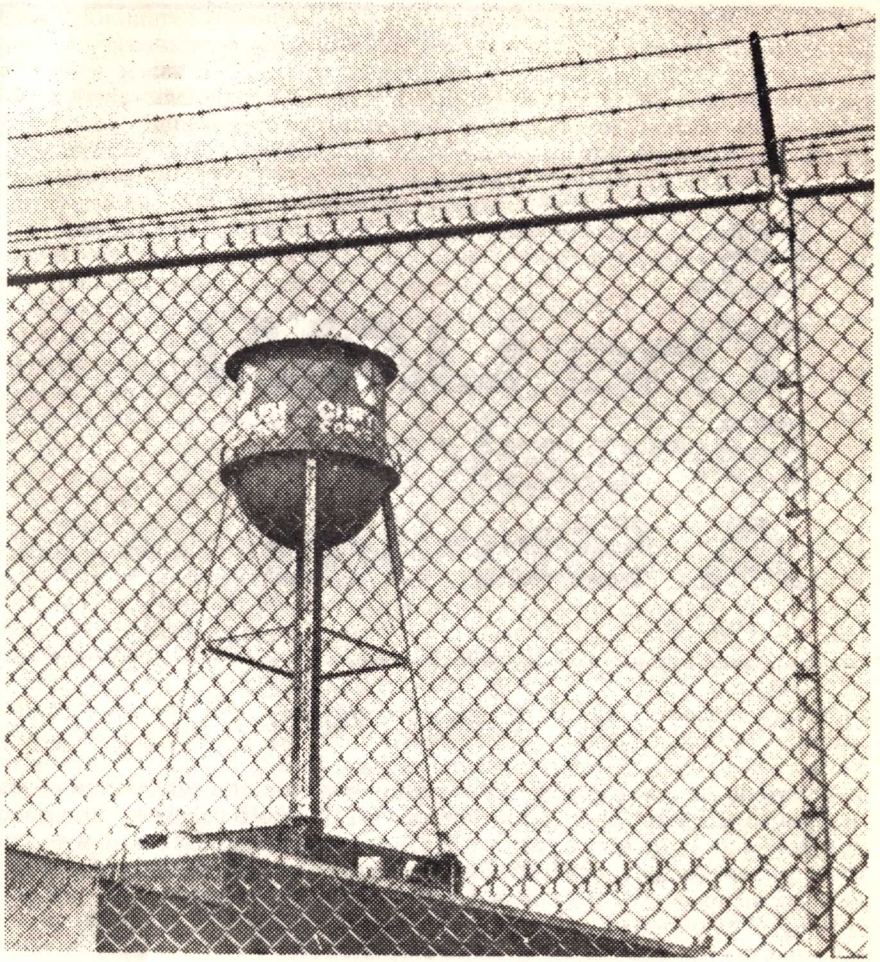
1. WAM TAKES "CREDIT"

Before the sit-down began, it was widely known that a confrontation was brewing at the Mack plant. Chrysler knew it; UAW officials knew it; a good number of the workers knew it. The question being discussed was not "if?" but "when and how?" As any fool knows, a confrontation can just as easily lead to a workers defeat as to a workers victory.

It was the opinion of a number of the Mack workers that, being forced to take on Chrysler and the UAW officials at the same time, it would be most effective and safest to press the fight in the framework of contract negotiations, then in progress. This was the attitude adopted by the "Watchdog". The August 14 issue expressed this view, but its distribution was canceled when the sit-down occurred. The lead article began: "Our contract expires at 11:59 p.m. on September 14. This is the time for bringing all of our local and national demands, grievances, problems and conflicts with Chrysler Corporation to a head."

Numerous workers had been won to the plan of building up to a shut down of Mack on September 14, whether or not there would be a sanctioned strike, and keeping the plant shut no matter what UAW officials said until the demands were met. The argument for this approach was that it would be harder to fire people with the contract expired. It was also argued that this approach would make it easiest to involve the largest number of people.

But the three WAM members in the plant were also aware of the explosive situation brewing. Isolated in most of the struggles going on up to that point, they saw the new situation as an opportunity to take the lead. Chrysler's decision to fire Gilbreth may have been a deliberate



Mack Avenue—a factory or a Chrysler Concentration Camp?

provocation. It was in this framework, that WAM decided to have Gilbreth sit-down on the line. They shared with others the belief that things in the plant were so tense, any incident could trigger a mass response. The belief was correct.

The sit-down attracted to itself the most active militant workers in the plant. It was viewed as a continuation of the struggle that had been long going on. Denying statements that it was a WAM strike, workers said: "No, its not a WAM strike, its a workers strike." Spokesmen were chosen and everyone else was instructed not to speak to the press. With the strike in progress, the debate over how to bring the brewing rebellion to a head was over. The only remaining question was: "How can we make this sit-down win."

WAM had a different view of the strike. Early on, WAM spokesmen demonstrated that they believed getting publicity for their organization

was the most important thing that could come out of the strike. This they showed to be much more important in their view than whether the workers would win or lose.

Outside the front gate, a WAM organizer, Bill Sacks, issued press statements to anyone who would listen to him. The following Free Press account (August 15) was typical:

"William Sacks, a WAM organizer, told newsmen the shutdown was planned Sunday at a meeting at WAM's Detroit headquarters, 14542 Fenkell. Among those at the meeting were Gilbreth and at least two other workers at the Mack Avenue plant. 'Bill Gilbreth prepared everybody for it,' said Sacks, a physical science instructor at Wayne County Community College. 'He said he would sit on his machine.'

"According to Sacks, WAM is an off-shoot of the Progressive Labor Party which claims to be Communist -oriented. Gilbreth is a PLP member and an organizer of WAM in Detroit, Sacks said."

Also out at the front gate was a picket line of about 20 students, some carrying pickets signed Wayne State SDS, and some carrying pickets signed WAM. The Mack workers who came to the gates to find out what was going on were shunted off to the sides. The students had grabbed the center stage for themselves.

WAM is basically a student group. It portrays to its members a very romantic and false conception of workers' movements and workers' struggles. From the start, WAM's behavior at Mack showed their concern was never, first and foremost, with building a workers' movement. Rather, they seemed mainly interested in looking for stunts that could be used to show students and others that WAM was really leading the workers' struggle.

Before the sit-down, most of the stunts WAM tried failed. No one would follow them. The only exception was a work stoppage of 17 people in response to a serious problem of heat and poor ventilation in the welding area. It was as a result of this activity that WAM leader Gilbreth had been fired.

Without a doubt, WAM members like Gilbreth came sincere in wanting to fight the company and the system. But in their mind's eye, the Mack plant was a movie set. The other workers were bit players, or "extras", while WAM was the star of a drama being staged for a different audience. When WAM took credit for the whole thing, they really believed their own story. Workers didn't join the protest, however, to build a platform from which to address student radicals.

2. FRASER DOES HIS BIT

Late evening, August 14, the Wednesday morning issue of the Detroit Free Press found its way into the plant. Its articles were more than a bit upsetting to those inside who had been sitting down since early morning. Under a sub-head: "Fired Worker Slugs Guard" ran an article including the following: "Both the UAW and the company blamed the takeover on a tiny band of radicals exploiting health and safety grievances at Chrysler plants...Chrysler said it would 'use every legal means we can' to oust the protestors and the union said it would support any 'reasonable' action by the company."

Union leaders were quoted as saying that Chrysler in cooperation with the UAW had just corrected the safety problems at Mack: "Fraser said the union gave Chrysler a list of 10 safety items to be corrected over the

weekend. Fraser emphasized Tuesday's troubles at the plant were over Gilbreth's firing and not health and safety problems."

Fraser praised Chrysler for the tough attitude being taken against the Mack workers, chiding them for being too soft on the workers in the past. "Chrysler had taken the correct steps in sending the Mack Stamping Plant workers home and telling other employees not to report. We don't place a premium on lawlessness," Fraser said. The Free Press continued:

"Fraser traced the trouble at the Mack stamping plant to Chrysler caving in to the demands of the two men who took over the Jefferson assembly plant...He said it was 'absolutely' a mistake for Chrysler to give in during the Jefferson lock-in." Fraser had stopped even pretending to be on the workers' side.

During the night, many of those inside, in ones and twos, left the plant. A workers' negotiating committee was elected. They met with Fraser who told the committee he was doing everything he could. His final message: "Trust in your union leaders. Leave the plant."

"But are we all going to get fired?" asked a committee member.

"We don't know. Trust in your union leaders. Leave the plant."

3. WAITING OUT THE NIGHT

A Free Press reporter who spent the night inside with the workers describes the scene as follows: "It was 2:30 a.m. in a second floor cafeteria of the Chrysler Mack Ave. plant and as 42 wildcat strikers slept in makeshift beds, it seemed an unlikely place for the drama that was about to unfold. On lunch tables or first-aid stretchers suspended between tables, on bedding made of torn cartons and on rolls of paper towels used as pillows, they slept.

"Suddenly several workers strode in from a meeting with UAW officials and shouted: "Wake-up!" The inert bodies rose to life and shuffled to a table in a shadowy corner. A 39 year old woman welder stood on a bench and announced: 'They say there will be no negotiations until we are out of here and the plant is back at work.'

"A worker in a dark blue polo shirt shouted: 'They got pictures of us when we were out talking at the gate. So we are fired already. So when we walk out, we gain nothing. So there is nothing for us to go for, but to go all the way!' "

After an hour's debate, the decision was made to stay in the plant. There was nothing left to lose. Several workers had expressed how demoralizing it would be to sneak out of the plant in the middle of the night "with our tails between our legs". In the minds of some, there was still one faint glimmer of hope.

Earlier, those in the plant had issued a call for Mack workers to congregate at the plant's main gate the following day at noon. There was the hope that a mass rally of support might turn the tide. Why not wait out the night and find out?

By morning the number in the plant was down to 35. Word filtering in from outside made it clear that the hoped for mass rally would not come off. Workers were being frightened away by charges that the whole thing had nothing to do with Mack, but was the work of communist outsiders with goals totally foreign to Mack workers and their problems. These charges seemed verified by the public statements of WAM leaders. Workers who on Tuesday had come by the plant to check things out for themselves were greeted with a picket line that had no Mack workers on it. They had heard

speeches over bull-horns explaining that there was a communist led strike going on. When one of the Mack workers had asked a question of the speaker with the bull-horn, he was angrily denounced with the charge: "That's an anti-communist question."

While the students in front of the plant had been having great fun playing communist, Chrysler officials were snapping photographs of every Chrysler worker who came by. There were police units all over the area. Word came back that very few Mack workers would be showing up at the noon mass rally that had been called for. The sit-down, by then, seemed to be a loser.

4. THE SIT-DOWN ENDS

Inside the plant, the dwindled remains of the sit-down strikers were meeting. Considerable heat was being directed against Gilbreth and WAM. "Listen Bill," intoned one sit-downer, "It doesn't make any difference to me that you're a communist. But why does it have to be spread all over the papers?" Another question was raised time and again: "Why did you have to say that the whole thing was planned in advance?" Privately to a friend, and with some bitterness, one worker said: "Gilbreth and his people might have planned for him to come into the plant and sit on the line, but they didn't plan what I did."

No sit-downers openly expressed anger at WAM because they called themselves "Communists." Everyone said they agreed that plant guards have no right to lay a hand on a worker and that Gilbreth, or anyone else, has an absolute right to defend themselves when attacked. But some began questioning Gilbreth's motives for being in the plant that day in the first place.

There was however, widespread anger about the way WAM had undercut the effectiveness of the sit-down by trying to turn it into a massive publicity stunt for their organization.

Most of the three dozen workers remaining in the plant privately decided it was time to leave. They felt isolated and alone. As a first step, the group decided to move the site of protest from the 2nd floor Welding area to the plant's main gate. By 10:30 AM, under police threat, everyone left the premises, and the plant occupation was over.

5. PICKET LINE

Though the sit-down was over, the strike was not. Within minutes, a crowd of at least 200 Mack workers joined those who had just left the plant at the local 212 union hall down the street. An impromptu union meeting was held. Worker after worker got up stating: "We've got to keep the plant closed until they agree not to fire anyone." "If we can't keep the plant closed until they agree not to fire, a lot of people are going to lose their jobs."

Union official after official got up to say: "go back to work." Hank Ghant, local union president, and Ken Morris regional UAW director carried the ball. According to the Detroit News account: "Ghant, shouting to be heard, told the dissidents that the union would be unable to discuss their demands with Chrysler if the plant was picketed. 'You put up a picket line and boom, our bargaining power is gone.' Ghant told them, "The company said it wouldn't negotiate as long as you stayed in the plant and it won't negotiate if you're picketing.' "

In the debate, the experience of both the recent Jefferson and Forge strikes were raised in response to the officers. "At Jefferson, union representatives told them to go home, but they said they wouldn't until Chrysler agreed not to fire anyone. They held out and got the agreement that there would be no firings. At the forge, when the workers did listen, and went back to work, 15 were fired. Let's tell them we'll all go back to work when everyone can go back."

The News describes the meeting's end as follows: "Both Ghant and Morris were shouted down and a vote was called for a motion to immediately begin picketing the plant. All of the nearly 200 men and women in the meeting room raised their hands to signify their support for the motion." With this, the union hall emptied as workers filed back to the plant and set up picket lines. It was this strike that was broken next morning by a goon squad of 1,000 UAW officials from the greater Detroit area.

6. GOON SQUAD

"An overwhelming majority of contented workers were being kept from their jobs by a small band of strikers...5 percent were forcibly keeping the remaining 95 percent from their jobs...It was outside agitators who dominated and exploited even this handful of workers who alone stood to benefit. ...The strikers think that they are acting for their own best interests; in reality they are acting for the best interests of a vast conspiracy to destroy all for which life is worth living."

The above quote sounds very much like statements made by UAW officials and Chrysler spokesmen during the Mack strike and the other wildcats that preceeded it. The quote comes from a description (in "Sit-Down" by Sidney Fine) of statements by General Motors in trying to discredit the UAW during the 1937 sit-down strike and organizing drive. Remarks like:"they represent only a small minority"; "outside agitators"; "dupes of outsiders" have a long history. These phrases have been used by big corporations, and their supporters time and again in American history. They are heard every time workers find themselves forced to fight back against the ravages of corporate greed.

The stupidity of WAM and their public statements played into the hands of those who wished to clamp a lid on what was then a growing rebellion among Detroit auto workers. Never has the "red-scare-outside-agitator-conspiracy-theory" of workers' struggle sounded so believable. The top UAW leadership, under the direction of V.P. Douglas Fraser and Secretary treasurer Emil Mazey, were quick to move to take advantage of the new situation. They decided to use a "Red Scare",not only to crush the Mack strike, but also as an opportunity to launch a counter-offensive against dissidents throughout the Detroit area.

All day Wednesday, August 15, the phones at Solidarity House were busy. Local union officers were called with the urgent message:"The union is in trouble. We need your help." The local officers in turn canvassed their committeemen and stewards: "The union needs you at Mack tomorrow morning. Those communist outside agitators don't want to let the workers back into the plant. We can't let them destroy the union." Where necessary, arms were twisted. By 4:00 a.m. on the 16th, there were 1,000 UAW members, mostly officials, sitting in the huge auditorium of the local 212 union hall.

It was a "save our union" pep rally. There were rousing speeches about outside disrupters threatening "our union." 'The whole thing was described in the News by a high UAW official "as a declaration of war against radicals who seem bent on seizing control of the UAW and shutting down all of the Big Three auto makers this year to win a series of demands." The meeting's main speaker, Ken Morris, stated, "This is a drive on the part of members to build and protect the union which we have built over the many years." It was in a mood of patriotic ferver that the gathering was marched out of the union hall and into the early morning gloom. They were marching to Mack to do their duty for union and country.

According to the "Detroit News": "The UAW loyalists, led yesterday by several union vice presidents, are primarily executive board members, committeement, and stewards from the 20 Chrysler union locals in the Detroit area." The main purpose for mobilizing these stalwarts was not for the battle of Mack Ave. It was for a different battle. They were mobilized to carry the fight "to save our union" into all the Detroit area plants.

In the next few days, mini-goon squads were set up in a number of Chrysler locals. Although WAM had no presence in any other Chrysler plant besides Mack, a campaign began to link all militant workers to WAM, to harass and intimidate them, and in some cases, help set them up to be fired. In several locals, workers distributing leaflets were attacked by local mini-goon squads.

The Dodge Main Local 3 union paper, for instance, came out headlined: "Local Warns Agitators". The entire front page is devoted to an article on this theme by then local president Andrew Hardy: "The leadership of this local union, after attending a specially called meeting at the local union hall, has gone on record to do all in their power to stop any further disruptions of work by outside agitators or dissident groups within the plant. The actions of a small group of persons in the past few weeks at different Detroit area Chrysler Plants...must be stopped. ...This local union is pledged to stop this type of action from ever happening again. It certainly was heartwarming to see some 1,300 UAW members at the gates of the Mack Ave plant to show the small handful of dissidents that we did mean business. ...I want to warn all such agitators in our plant and those outside organizations such as W.A.M., etc. that we will not stand still for any more nonsense in this plant. Every man and woman in the Hamtramck Assembly Plant is working because they must earn money to support their families. If they are in that plant for any other reason, such as to carry on a program for any outside organizations, they might just as well quit their jobs right now and move on to other locations where they feel they can get by with their illegal tactics... We urge that you also refuse to accept smut literature from those outside agitators who are trying to overthrow not only your UNION but the United States Government as well."

But the "outside agitator", red scare campaign of the UAW officials worked nowhere near as well as was hoped. In plant after plant, there were a good number of workers who understood that behind the "save our union" and "outside agitator" talk of the union officials, stood an important fact: these union officials had broken a workers' strike and had helpedChrysler to fire 73 workers. Many also understood that a campaign was under way to either drive out or scare into submission the most militant and outspoken workers in every plant.

At Dodge, for example, when the local officials' mini-goon squad started

trying to drive away leaflet distributors, a large group of Dodge workers gathered and let it be known that if there were any interference with these leafletters there would be trouble. The union officials backed off.

But soon the local get-tough goon squad ideas began to fade. Few elected officials were willing to maintain the out front, gung-ho attitude when it started to appear that this would cost dearly in the coming elections. While this major counter-offensive against worker militants did not come off, the growing level of struggle and militancy was effectively dampened. It was a set back to the developing workers movement inside the UAW, but it was far from a death blow.

As the summer ended, one fact became clear: the unrest, the dissatisfaction, and the anger are there. The problem is to find an effective and constructive way to focus this energy.

7. AFTER THE STRIKE

After the Mack strike was clearly broken, the majority of the 72 fired workers became quickly demoralized. Some just went out and got other jobs forgetting about the whole thing. But many had a hard time finding work and some were blacklisted from all the Detroit area plants. High seniority workers could not even afford to consider starting over with new jobs. Among the fired workers were about a dozen with over 20 years seniority. Approaching retirement, these workers had already given Chrysler their best years. At stake for them was not so much a question of a job, but their pension rights. Remaining fired would lose them the right to a dignified retirement after 30 years of factory labor.

Local union officials took advantage of the demoralization that had set it. One by one they would take fired workers aside. "We know you didn't really know what you were doing," they would say. "You just got caught up in the excitement and were dragged along by those trouble makers, didn't you?" And before the fired worker had a chance to respond, the rap would continue: "President Ghant knows who the real trouble makers are. We are going to try to make sure that innocent people like you don't get punished for what they did."

At the same time, the most militant of the workers became the subject of red-baiting, threats, and even physical attacks. Some of the fired workers went along with this. Although none openly joined in with union officials and the company in publicly attacking other fired workers, several privately agreed to help the union officials and company finger the "real trouble makers." Most of the fired workers, however, just laid low. The whisper campaign worked. The big majority of fired workers refused to participate in any joint defense campaign to fight for their jobs back, to straighten out the lies being told about their strike, or to expose the traitor's role of the UAW leadership in helping bust the strike.

A handful of fired workers, together with friends in the plant who had not been fired, did begin a defense campaign. Leaflets were written explaining the situation to Mack workers. Local union membership attention was directed at the date September 14. On midnight of the 14th, along with the national three year Chrysler contract, the local supplemental agreement would expire.

There was once a tradition in the labor movement that union leaders would resist settling contracts while there were fired workers on the streets. With the contracts expired, the Mack plant was legally free to have an official strike. Within a matter of days, shutting Mack would shut every

Chrysler plant in the country. The most outspoken of the fired workers and their friends in the plant began agitating for an official strike that would shut Mack down until all fired workers were reinstated.

Union officials countered this campaign by stating that the company would refuse to reinstate anyone as long as leaflets kept coming out. They also threatened that any fired worker seen distributing a leaflet could kiss their job good-bye forever.

At midnight on the 14th, the UAW leadership announced an official national strike against Chrysler. It lasted only a week. Most union members believe the terms of settlement had been agreed upon even before the strike began. But both Chrysler and the UAW leadership wanted at least a short strike to let off steam. The strike accomplished little of importance. In money terms, it was a disaster which fell far behind inflation. Over its three year life, this contract will take a sizable bite out of the real spending power of each UAW members' pay check.

The things that sounded good were: a dental plan; voluntary overtime; higher pension rates; and the beginning of a new union/company safety program. But there was a catch in each of these. The money for the dental plan was taken out of the pay increase; the voluntary overtime had so many loopholes as to be meaningless; the new pension plan had no Cost-of-Living clause to protect it, meaning that the gains would be quickly destroyed by inflation; and the new safety program had no teeth or enforcing powers.

But the official strike came after the rebellion had been quashed. In plants like Mack and Jefferson, the contract was ratified by a strong margin with the overwhelming majority of workers not even bothering to vote. When the week was up, everyone went back to work in an orderly fashion.

Word went out at Mack that some of the workers would start getting their jobs back **if** the leaflets and agitation stopped. Among the few workers still actively and openly campaigning against the contract sell-out and for getting everyone's job back were fired workers with over 25 years seniority. The pressure was too great. The remaining activists unanimously agreed the time had come to lay low.

Thirty-five of the fired workers were reinstated with penalties from three to six months on the record. All were told: "Keep your noses clean. Next time you get into trouble its out on the streets for good." For seven months, all organized activity in opposition to the union leadership and company stopped at the Mack plant. In May of 1974, the opposition at Mack started regrouping. Workers who had been fired ran on a slate for UAW convention delegates against the local leadership. With a small voting turnout, the leadership won by an in-plant vote margin of about 550 to 300.

The **Watchdog** started coming out again in July. Most of the best, younger militants at Mack who were fired never did get their jobs back. Most of those reinstated were forced into a very cautious role, having the threat of immediate discharge hanging over their heads. Most of the small group who put out the **Watchdog**, the Local 212 chapter of the United National Caucus, are high seniority workers. The younger, militant workers in the plant are still holding back from joining up with the opposition. Red baiting continues, but has a limited effect. But this is not the problem that bothers most of the younger militants. They want an answer to another question: "Is it possible, to organize, to fight, and to win?" If not, why bother?

Epilog: We Must Organize

An auto workers movement must be built in the United States today. From the workers point of view, this is not an opinion, its a fact. From every direction, auto workers are under attack. They're hitting our paychecks, our job security, and our working conditions. They'll even rob us of our dignity and self respect.

It is the duty of our union to organize us in self defense against these attacks. But the UAW leadership refuses to do this. Instead they line up with the companies and co-operate in keeping us down; the Mack Ave. story is only one example of this. Twenty more stories could be written exposing the activities of these traitors just over the past few years.

There is the General Motors Assembly Division story, where the UAW leaders co-operated with General Motors in organizing the most massive speedup campaign in recent history. They stopped the 18 GMAD locals from joining together to fight the General Motors monster corporation in unity. With the help of Solidarity House, GM was able to take on and defeat these locals one at a time, keeping the Norwood, Ohio GMAD workers on the streets for 26 weeks just to prove the point, taking them back under worse conditions then when they walked out.

There is the 1973 Ford contract story where the UAW leaders signed a contract constitutionally rejected by the membership. Adding insult to injury they then clarified their position at the 1974 UAW Convention by asserting that the leadership reserves the right to sign any contract, no matter how the membership votes.

There is the Wage Freeze story where UAW officials cooperated with every government business attempt to hold down wages so that working people must pay the costs of inflation rather than the wealthy corporations.

We could go on. And members of every local will have their own stories to add. The important thing to remember is that it will only get worse and

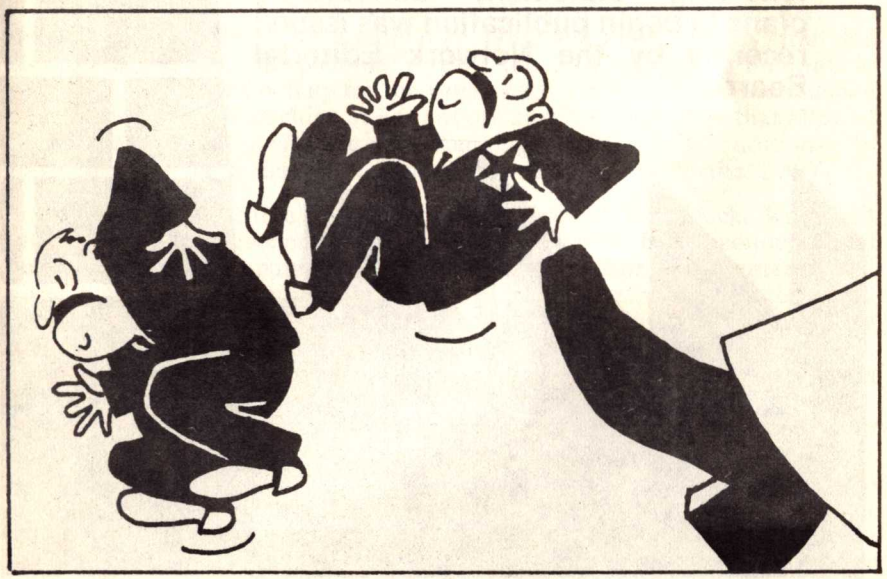
worse unless **we** do something about it. Auto workers are taking a licking, and the bosses have not yet begun to fight as dirty as they will in the next few years. Hard times are coming like nobody in the United States has seen for the past 30 years. If you think things are bad now, just wait.

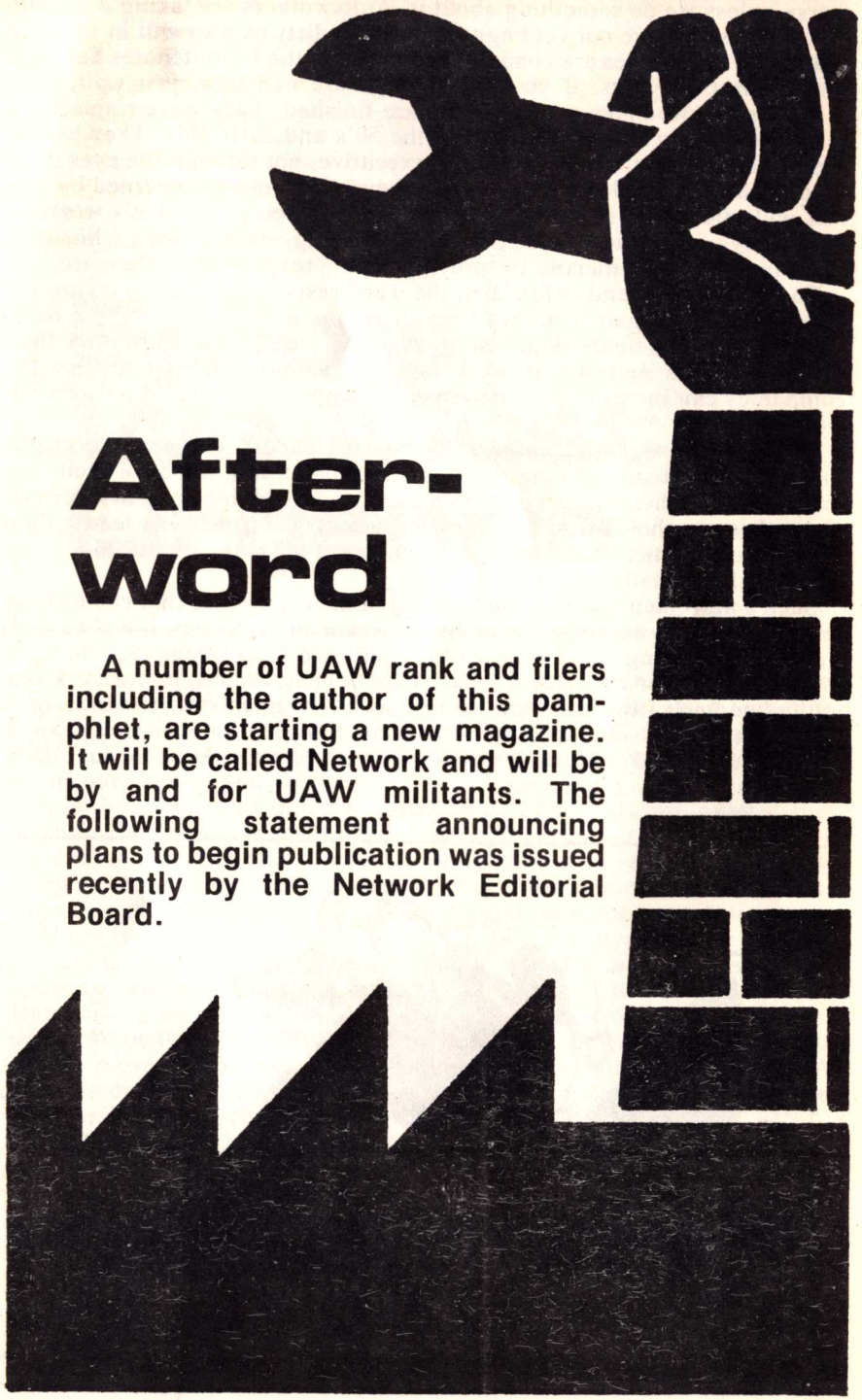
The people who now run the UAW are finished. They were trained and tamed by the big automakers during the 50's and early 60's. They look at the world through the eyes of an auto executive, not through the eyes of an auto worker. As hard times get worse, they will be more concerned by how this will effect Chrysler's profits than how it effects Chrysler's workers. They buy admission into the world of big money men, business executives, and politicians by proving how "responsible" they are.

To businessmen and politicians, the word responsible means taking the side of business against the workers. It means getting the workers to go along with "belt tightening," so the fat cats don't have to tighten their belts. It means getting the workers to go along with speedup, so the companies can increase productivity and compete more ruthlessly on the world market.

But how long will auto workers put up with leaders who are responsible to the boss, instead of being responsible to the crying needs of their own membership? They will put up with it until a new fighting movement comes along that can show them a better way, a movement that can lead a fight for a democratic, class struggle union, that can really meet the memberships needs.

Such a movement can only be built out of the experience that comes from the fights that go on every day in the shops and in the union. It will be built by militants willing to take the lead in their own local struggles; willing to join up with other militants to share experiences; willing to dig for a real understanding of the situation we face as UAW members; and willing to explore strategies and tactics out of which a full program for victory can be developed. Nobody else will do this for us. It must be done by UAW members, or it won't happen.





After-word

A number of UAW rank and filers including the author of this pamphlet, are starting a new magazine. It will be called Network and will be by and for UAW militants. The following statement announcing plans to begin publication was issued recently by the Network Editorial Board.

network

uaw militants' voice

COMING SOON:

a new magazine, by and for active militants in the UAW

With a first issue planned for publication February 1, 1975, the **Network** Editorial Board is now seeking subscribers and contributors. **Network** will be a kind of magazine that has not existed in this country for many years. It will be addressed to an audience that is still small today: active militants inside the UAW who wish to exchange experiences and explore ideas and perspectives with workers from other plants and other locals, with the goal of building a fighting rank and file movement throughout the union.

It is our belief that the next few years will see major changes inside the UAW. For the past 25 years, the powerful bureaucratic machine that was built by Walter Reuther has totally dominated our union and has strangled its internal life. Over the past many years, the large majority of militants in the UAW who have stood up for the rank and file have either been crushed with the help of this machine or bought off. But the conditions that allowed such a machine to flourish are now changing. And the new conditions will pave the way for a mass rank and file movement inside the UAW.

The Reuther machine, now headed by Leonard Woodcock, was built during a time of economic prosperity. The whole U.S. economy, and particularly the companies making autos, agricultural implements and aircraft, was growing rapidly, with little or no real competition on the world market. The companies badly wanted labor peace and a green light to raise productivity, through both new technology and old-fashioned speed-up. They were in a good economic position and were willing to pay for this labor peace. They and Reuther struck a deal.

At first, this deal didn't seem all that bad for most auto workers. The companies agreed to substantial economic improvements for UAW members. Between 1945 and 1965 the living standards and security of auto workers rose dramatically. UAW fringe benefit programs in their present form were developed during this period: C.O.L.A., S.U.B., S&A, pension rights, etc. Spendable real wages also went way up. All this gave Reuther

the reputation of being a great "labor statesman"; the man who was leading the workers into the "middle classes".

In return, Reuther did a job for the companies. Using his fantastic reputation, he set out to destroy all union power on the local and shop floor level. The companies wanted dictatorial power to run the plants just as they pleased. Their power was cut into when the union was organized, and Reuther helped the companies get most of it back. He allowed the companies to push the workers harder and harder, paying themselves back through increased production the costs of the higher wages and improved fringe benefits.

The UAW stopped defending the workers on the shop floor, and instead began siding with the company. A union is no stronger than its power base on the local level, and this power was destroyed. With no real power, stewards, committeemen and local officials found that the price of staying in office was to become flunkies both for the international union leadership and for the companies. Little survived of the fighting tradition for which the UAW was once known. But Reuther could keep on getting away with it because he had destroyed his opposition while maintaining a "fantastic" reputation.

Since 1965, this has all been changing. The economic situation is different. Prosperity was replaced with economic stagnation. American companies began facing stiff competition on the world market. They could no longer easily afford to maintain the living standards auto workers had become accustomed to. The economic position of auto workers stopped improving and started going backwards. With the power of the local and shop floor union almost destroyed, the companies started really pushing speedup, harassment and discipline, and there was little organized resistance. By this time, the old Reuther machine had become so corrupt that it continued playing the role of policeman for the companies, even without the wages and fringes tradeoff. The fantastic reputation of the UAW leadership and their machine died a hard death.

Today, most workers recognize that the large majority of those who run our union, from the top to the bottom, are nothing but hustlers out for themselves. They have little respect or following, but hold on to their office by a combination of apathy, favor-selling and intimidation. Disgust with the present UAW leadership continues to grow and deepen among the ranks. What credibility they still have comes from the fact that they continue to administer those union benefits and rights that this leadership group has not yet gotten around to giving away.

By 1975, the economic stagnation which began in 1965 is turning into deep recession or even depression—accompanied by runaway inflation. The union's early economic victories—wage gains, job security and fringe benifits—will be decimated. C.O.L.A. will prove ineffective in protecting wages whose real buying power will drop and keep on dropping. In the wake of mass lay-offs, the much heralded S.U.B. program will dry up. Workers will resist retiring as inflation destroys pensions, promising the retirees nothing but poverty in their old ages.

At the same time, speedup, harassment and firings will reach levels undreamed of since the union was organized. Companies will be trying to bolster sagging profits and their competitive situation by trying to squeeze more and more production out of their workers. The more the unemployment, the more confident they will be that they can get away with it.

The attack on the workers by the companies can be stopped. But the

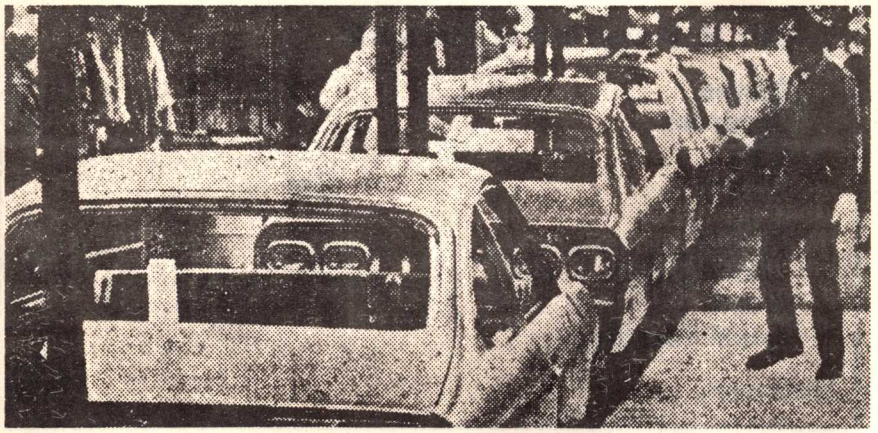
machine that runs the UAW is scared to death of leading the kind of fight needed to defend the workers. Such a fight would mobilize and inspire UAW members. There is no doubt that once such a fight is underway, it will create a movement that will sweep the corrupt clique that today runs the UAW right out of office. Fearing this, they will help the companies try to keep the lid on.

But it won't work. Frustration and discontent in the ranks will grow as the company attack mounts. Without warning, fear and apathy will become transformed into anger and militancy. Auto workers will be seeking a new leadership with a program for effective action.

The same pressure that generates a militant response in the ranks has the opposite effect on the machine. Starting at the top, there will be a growing conflict within the leadership itself. As the distance between the bureaucracy and the ranks continues to widen, the leadership group will more and more see the handwriting on the wall. They will see that the days of the old Reuther machine are numbered. Different parts of the leadership will come up with different ideas of what should be done to save their positions and are likely to start fighting among themselves. This has already started to happen. One thing seems clear. The old machine is so rotten that the different programs its present members come up with will all be rotten too.

By 1976, there is a good chance that there will be a major rank and file revolt over the terms of the new contract. By 1977, it is very possible that there will be a split in the top union leadership, with different factions fighting it out to determine who will replace Woodcock when he retires that year. In the meantime there will be increasing discontent, struggle and organization in hundreds of local unions across the country.

Network is being published as a contribution toward pulling together a militant rank and file movement throughout the UAW that can challenge the corrupt leadership and lead effective action in defense of the union membership. Our editorial board is made up of UAW members who have been active in various local struggles and opposition caucuses. Several are also active in the United National Caucus, the only real national opposition group to the rotten Reuther/Woodcock machine. **Network** supports the U.N.C. and will encourage its readers to join the Caucus. But it is an independent publication and all responsibility for it will rest with its editors.



We decided to put out this magazine so that UAW militants from different local unions could begin a serious interchange of experiences and ideas. We will be bringing ideas of our own to this magazine, but we will also be counting on the greatest possible degree of contribution and input from our readership.

We plan to devote space in each issue to reports from different local unions on rank and file struggles, activities and experiences. We want to explore tactics, strategies, what works and what doesn't work. We also plan to devote space regularly to the struggles for equality of women, blacks, and other specially oppressed groups in the UAW.

Another regular feature will be developments in the union as a whole: what Solidarity House is up to. We will try to get material on what is going on in the industry and in the economy and report on it as it affects the rank and file UAW member.

To begin with, we expect the readership will be small. But we expect that conditions over the next few years will generate a growing audience for this kind of magazine. We call it **Network**, because we see it as a way for UAW militants all over the country to keep in touch with each other and begin developing a strategy based on our experiences. A network of UAW militants with a common approach to struggle will at some point be able to play a key role in carrying out the kind of fight that will be needed to defend UAW members and all working people from growing corporate abuse.

Be a charter subscriber and contributor to **Network**. Fill in the enclosed blank and return it to us. When you receive the first issue in February, we will bill you $3 for the first six issues. They are planned to come out every other month.

Jack Weinberg, Local 212, for the Network Editorial Board

Other Ediorial Board members belong to the following locals: 3, 7, 51, 235.

I wish to subscribe to Network:

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Network,